



Health and Stability at Risk: A Call to Collective Action

A Reflection on Missouri's Health and Stability Roundtable

Community Health Commission of Missouri | October 30, 2025

Understanding the Moment

The Community Health Commission of Missouri (CHCM) recently convened *Health and Stability at Risk: Understanding the Human Impact of the Federal Shutdown in Missouri*—a roundtable bringing together policy leaders, advocates, and community members to discuss the compounding crises of rising healthcare costs, suspended food benefits, and the longest projected government shutdown in U.S. history.

The timing could not be more urgent. As the *Missouri Independent* recently reported, premiums for 2026 marketplace plans are expected to rise by as much as **30%**, driven in part by uncertainty over federal subsidies and the expiration of enhanced premium tax credits. Meanwhile, more than **170,000 Missourians are at risk of losing health coverage**, and over **58,000 face potential SNAP benefit disruptions**—threatening not only family well-being but the economic stability of entire communities.

What We Heard

Our discussion began with sobering data from policy and economic experts including Dr. Timothy McBride (Washington University), Gina Aitch (Missouri Budget Project), and Sheldon Weisgrau (Missouri Foundation for Health). Together, they outlined how the federal stalemate is amplifying long-standing inequities—particularly for older adults, low-income families, and those managing chronic conditions.

The conversation then turned toward community-based responses. Legal and systems leaders such as Earlene Bolton (Legal Services of Eastern Missouri) and lived-experience advocates—including Pastor Michael Robinson, Shellie Robinson, and Shanelle Woods—illuminated the reality behind the numbers. Their message was clear: **those closest to the need are best positioned to meet it**, yet resources and decision-making power rarely reach those communities.

Key Takeaways

1. **The crisis is compounding, not isolated.** Rising health premiums and stalled benefits are not policy abstractions—they are lived emergencies that widen existing gaps in access to care, food, and stability.
2. **Community is both first responder and long-term stabilizer.** Local organizations are already mobilizing to meet essential needs, often with minimal resources.



3. **Trust is the foundation of effective response.** Rebuilding it requires consistency, transparency, and partnership—not one-time relief efforts.
4. **Data and dignity must move together.** Quantitative evidence is essential, but equally vital are the narratives that humanize its impact and guide responsive action.

Our Call to Action

1. Elevate and humanize the data.

Continue to amplify the real-life impact behind the numbers. The loss of healthcare coverage and food benefits is not a political issue—it is a public health emergency.

2. Reimagine how we partner with community.

Government response will be delayed, and community capacity alone cannot fill the gap. We must collaborate to identify and prioritize needs, align resources, and reallocate support to where trust and relationships already exist.

3. Invest in lasting solutions.

Short-term aid without long-term planning risks retraumatizing communities. Develop a phased, sustained approach that builds pathways to recovery and stability beyond the current crisis.

4. Lead with presence, not just policy.

Show up—consistently and without condition. Lasting relationships, not transactions, will determine whether families can weather this storm.

A Closing Reflection

As one community panelist reminded us, the message families need to hear right now is simple yet profound:

“We’re going to be alright.”

This is not a hollow reassurance—it is a declaration of resilience and shared responsibility. Even amid policy uncertainty, community remains our most reliable infrastructure for care, courage, and collective healing.

Let us continue to elevate the data *and* the stories, to defend hope, and to model the equity-centered, community-led partnerships that Missouri needs now more than ever.

For More Information

Visit chcmissouri.org for event highlights, resources, and follow-up actions from the *Health and Stability Roundtable*.