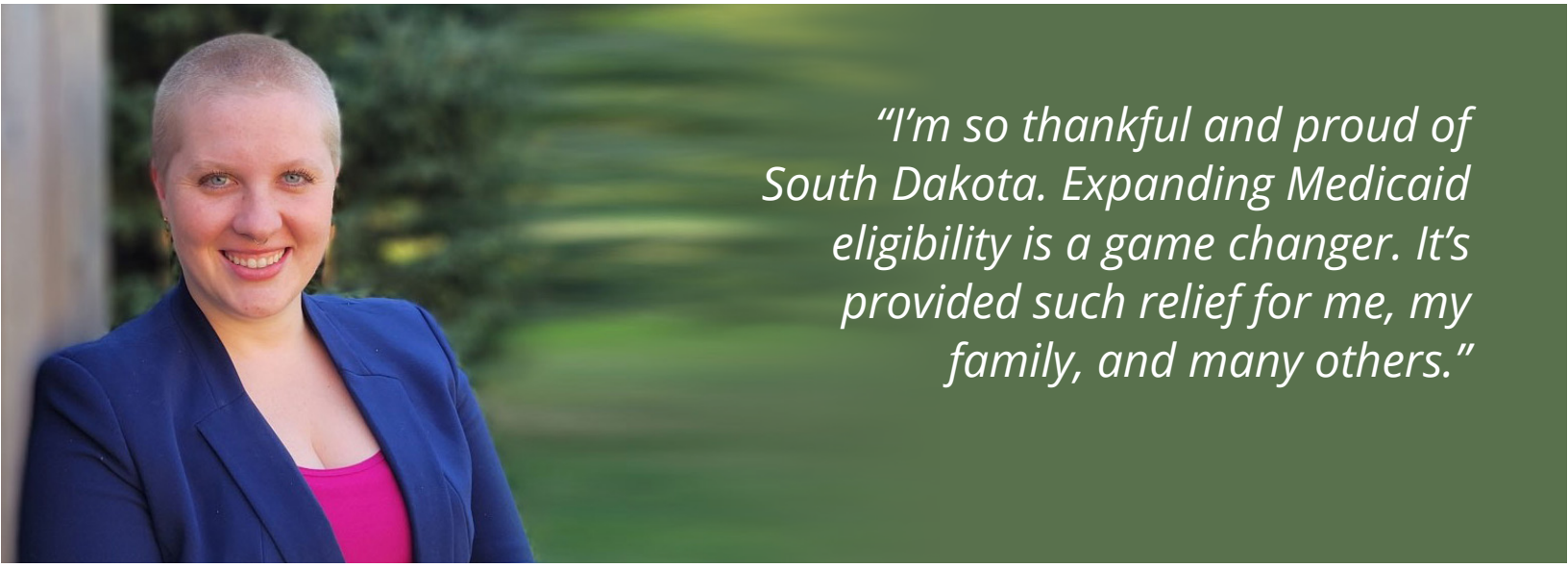
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

When Access to Care Allows You to Care for Your Family

Sarah H. - Sioux Falls, South Dakota



Sarah's youngest son started experiencing Psychogenic Nonepileptic seizures at five years old, and continues to experience one to five pseudo seizures daily. Sarah says these seizures are how her son's body responds to stress. While most people feel "fight or flight" when anxious, her son has seizures. During these episodes, he drops to the ground and is unresponsive.

Because of the frequency of her son's seizures, Sarah had to quit her full-time job to take care of him. Choosing to leave her full-time position left Sarah uninsured, "I knew it was a risk. Any unplanned medical emergency could completely derail my family's future," Sarah said.

After leaving her job with the Department of Social Services, helping people enroll in Medicaid, she was unable to enroll in Medicaid herself. The mother of two took a part-time job at a dental office and was working to build a small business. Despite struggling to balance the costs of caring for her son and providing for her family, her modest income made her ineligible for the program.

In November of 2022, South Dakota passed Medicaid expansion. Prior to the vote, an adult with two kids had to make less than $10,590 a year to qualify for coverage. Now, families of three earning up to $31,780 are eligible.

Sarah is now enrolled in Medicaid and receives regular care. She says now she doesn't have to decide between going to the doctor and her family's livelihood and looks forward to when she will no longer stress about the impact of an unexpected medical emergency.

"I'm so thankful and proud of South Dakota. Expanding Medicaid eligibility is a game changer. It's provided such relief for me, my family, and many others."