Jason Helgerson, leaving his job this week as New York Medicaid director after 7 years, blogged in Health Affairs about the lessons he learned. He says in the post that when his New York experience is combined with the previous 4 years as Wisconsin Medicaid director, he is the nation’s longest-serving Medicaid director. The average tenure of a Medicaid director, according to Helgerson, is 19 months.

“I firmly believe being a Medicaid director is one of the best jobs in health care policy. You get to be both a policy maker and administrator. You face some of the biggest problems in US health care, and one way or the other, you must solve them.”

He points out that Medicaid is currently the biggest health insurance program in the country in terms of enrollment (more than 68 million) and the second biggest purchaser of health care (national spend of $565.5 billion), serving the youngest, oldest, and sickest in the country.

He summarizes his major lessons into five categories and provides his thoughts on each in his blog post:

- You can bend the Medicaid cost curve without taking benefits away from poor people, and stakeholder engagement holds the key.
- Medicaid is a scalable and highly cost-effective vehicle for reducing the uninsured rate.
- Medicaid can and should lead the way in health care delivery system reform.
- Medicaid programs must look beyond “legacy” health care models and support new care models.
- Medicaid is the most important health insurance program in the United States.