

NUECES COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT

BRIEFING PAPER

YourTexasBenefits.com as an Enrollment Pathway for the Nueces Aid Program

August 17, 2026

Executive Summary

The Nueces Aid Program is NCHD's local indigent health care program serving Nueces County residents who do not qualify for any other state or federal medical assistance. Currently, enrollment requires a paper or online application submitted directly to NCHD, supported by documentation of residency, income, resources, and identity — a process administered entirely independent of the state benefits system.

This briefing examines whether and how YourTexasBenefits.com — the Texas Health and Human Services Commission's statewide integrated benefits portal used to apply for Medicaid, SNAP, CHIP, and TANF — could be used to facilitate enrollment in the Nueces Aid Program, reducing barriers for applicants and administrative burden for NCHD.

Key Finding: *The Nueces Aid Program occupies a unique dual position: it is both NCHD's CIHCP program under Chapter 61, Health and Safety Code, and a locally branded program with its own eligibility standards and service structure. The YourTexasBenefits.com portal pathway developed in the CIHCP streamlining framework is directly applicable to the Nueces Aid Program. With the right combination of administrative action and statutory authorization, Medicaid denials through YourTexasBenefits.com could trigger automatic Nueces Aid Program referrals — turning what is currently a disconnected two-step process into a seamless single application experience.*

Part I: The Nueces Aid Program — Current Structure

What the Nueces Aid Program Is

The Nueces Aid Program is NCHD's branded implementation of the County Indigent Health Care Program (CIHCP) under Chapter 61, Health and Safety Code, Subchapter C, which applies to persons residing in the service area of a public hospital or hospital district. As a Chapter 281 hospital district, NCHD bears full statutory responsibility for furnishing medical and hospital care to indigent and needy persons residing in Nueces County under §281.046.

The program provides hospital services, clinical services, pharmacy benefits, and primary care access to enrolled Nueces County residents. Enrollment is managed through NCHD Enrollment Services offices at four locations in Corpus Christi and Robstown, in addition to an online application portal available through the NCHD website.

Current Eligibility Requirements

Nueces Aid Program eligibility is more generous than the statutory CIHCP floor in one important respect — income. While Chapter 61's minimum income threshold is 21% of the federal poverty level, NCHD has exercised its §61.052 less restrictive authority to raise that ceiling substantially:

Eligibility Factor	Chapter 61 Minimum	Nueces Aid Program Standard
Income limit	21% of Federal Poverty Level	150% of Federal Poverty Guidelines
Resource limit	Set by HHSC rule (~\$2,000)	\$5,571.37 (personal property & homestead exempt; one auto per household exempt)
Residency	Nueces County resident	Nueces County resident (proof required)
Other coverage	Must be ineligible for other state/federal programs	Must not qualify for any other state or federal medical assistance program

Significance: *The Nueces Aid Program's income ceiling of 150% FPL is dramatically higher than the CIHCP statutory floor of 21% FPL. This means the program serves a substantially larger share of low-income Nueces County residents than a bare-minimum CIHCP program would. It also means the overlap with the Medicaid-denial population is broader — more Medicaid applicants will fall within Nueces Aid income limits upon denial than would qualify under a 21% FPL program.*

Current Application Process

The Nueces Aid Program currently offers two application pathways:

- Online application through the NCHD website (nchdcc.org) — applicants set up a username and password, receive a validation code, and complete the application through NCHD's own portal
- Paper application — downloadable from the NCHD website; can be mailed or uploaded to NCHD

Required supporting documentation includes: proof of Nueces County residency (house payment receipts, lease agreement, or utility bill); proof of resources (bank statements, vehicle list, property tax statement); proof of income (pay stubs for three months, tax returns, or benefit award letters for SSI, workers' compensation, child support, AFDC, or food stamps); and identification (Social Security card plus photo ID).

NCHD determines eligibility within 14 business days from the date all required documentation is received. Applicants must report changes in address, income, resources, or household composition — and any application for or receipt of SSI, TANF, or Medicaid — within 14 days of the change.

Current Gap: *There is no connection between the state's YourTexasBenefits.com portal and the Nueces Aid Program application. A person who applies for Medicaid through YourTexasBenefits.com and is denied must independently discover the Nueces Aid Program, locate an enrollment office or the NCHD website, and begin a separate application — even though much of the same information has already been collected and verified by the state.*

Part II: How YourTexasBenefits.com Could Facilitate Nueces Aid Enrollment

The Core Opportunity

YourTexasBenefits.com collects, at the point of a Medicaid application, virtually all of the information required for Nueces Aid Program enrollment. The table below maps YourTexasBenefits.com data fields to Nueces Aid Program documentation requirements:

Nueces Aid Requirement	YourTexasBenefits.com Data Field	Coverage
Full name and address	Applicant identity and address	Full
Nueces County residency	County of residence field	Full
Household composition and size	Household members and relationships	Full
Proof of income (all sources)	Income verification across all household members	Full
Liquid assets and resources	Asset verification (accounts, property, vehicles)	Full
Insurance/other coverage status	Insurance and coverage questions	Full
Ineligibility for other programs	Medicaid denial (establishes ineligibility)	Full — denial itself is the proof
Social Security number	SSN collected for Medicaid application	Full
Photo identification	Not collected by YourTexasBenefits.com	Gap — requires supplemental step

The only Nueces Aid documentation requirement not captured by the YourTexasBenefits.com application is photo identification. This gap is narrow and operationally manageable — NCHD could satisfy this requirement through a brief in-person or remote verification step without requiring a full re-application.

Three Enrollment Pathway Models

Model 1 — Auto-Referral Upon Medicaid Denial (Primary Model)

Under this model, when a Nueces County applicant applies for Medicaid through YourTexasBenefits.com and is denied, HHSC automatically transmits the applicant's verified eligibility data to NCHD's enrollment system — with the applicant's consent — triggering a Nueces Aid Program application. The denial date serves as the application date. NCHD then contacts the applicant to complete the photo identification step and complete enrollment.

This model directly mirrors the auto-referral mechanism in proposed new §61.0047 of the Health and Safety Code, which is the central innovation of the CIHCP streamlining framework developed for NCHD's board consideration. Because the Nueces Aid Program is NCHD's implementation of CIHCP, §61.0047's auto-referral, once enacted, would apply directly to the Nueces Aid Program by operation of law.

The operational flow would be:

- Applicant applies for Medicaid at YourTexasBenefits.com

- Applicant is denied Medicaid; income and resources verified as within Nueces Aid limits
- With applicant's consent, HHSC transmits verified data to NCHD Enrollment Services
- NCHD contacts applicant within 5 business days to request photo ID verification
- NCHD completes eligibility determination within 14 business days of receiving referral
- Applicant enrolled in Nueces Aid Program — single seamless process from initial Medicaid application

Model 2 — Direct CIHCP Intake Pathway on YourTexasBenefits.com

Under proposed new §531.0255 of the Government Code, HHSC would be required to build a CIHCP intake pathway directly into the YourTexasBenefits.com portal. For Nueces County applicants, this pathway would route directly to the Nueces Aid Program — allowing applicants to apply without first going through a Medicaid application. An applicant who knows they are Medicaid-ineligible (or has already been denied) could begin a Nueces Aid application directly, with their data transmitted to NCHD upon completion.

This model is more operationally ambitious than Model 1, as it requires HHSC to build and maintain a county-specific routing mechanism for each of the 143 CIHCP program administrators statewide. The statewide service area mapping required by §531.0255 would identify Nueces County as served by NCHD under Subchapter C of Chapter 61, directing all Nueces County applicants in the portal to the Nueces Aid Program.

Model 3 — Administrative Coordination Agreement (No Legislation Required)

Under this model, NCHD enters into a voluntary coordination agreement with HHSC under existing authority. The agreement would provide that NCHD accepts income and household data verified through the YourTexasBenefits.com Medicaid application as satisfying the corresponding Nueces Aid Program documentation requirements — effectively treating the Medicaid application as a pre-screening tool. Applicants who are denied Medicaid and referred to NCHD (through outreach, clinic encounters, or HHSC staff) could complete a streamlined Nueces Aid enrollment using their existing YourTexasBenefits.com record.

This model is available today under §61.053's application procedure discretion and §61.052's less restrictive eligibility standards authority. It does not create a data pipeline or automated referral — it requires the applicant to bring their YourTexasBenefits.com documentation to NCHD — but it would eliminate duplicative data collection for those who do.

Bottom Line on Models: *Models 1 and 2 require the statutory amendments contemplated in the CIHCP streamlining framework. Model 3 is available now under existing authority. A phased approach — implementing Model 3 immediately while Models 1 and 2 are pursued through the legislative process — provides the fastest path to reducing enrollment barriers while building toward the most durable solution.*

Part III: Legal and Operational Considerations

Why the Nueces Aid Program's Income Standard Is a Strength Here

The Nueces Aid Program's income limit of 150% FPL is far higher than the 21% FPL CIHCP floor. This has an important practical consequence for the portal pathway: a much larger share of Medicaid-denied applicants will fall within Nueces Aid income limits than would qualify under a bare-minimum CIHCP program. In other words, the auto-referral trigger will generate more viable Nueces Aid referrals per Medicaid denial than it would for a district operating at the statutory floor — making the portal pathway proportionally more valuable for NCHD than for most other CIHCP administrators statewide.

The §281.071 Financial Inquiry and Nueces Aid Enrollment

As analyzed in prior briefings, §281.071 of the Health and Safety Code requires the NCHD administrator to inquire into a patient's financial circumstances when admitted to district facilities. New §285.092, proposed in the CIHCP Integration Bill, provides that portal-verified eligibility data transmitted under §61.0046 satisfies that inquiry obligation for CIHCP (Nueces Aid) eligibility purposes, while preserving NCHD's cost recovery authority. This provision is directly relevant to Nueces Aid Program enrollment: once §285.092 is enacted, a Nueces Aid enrollee whose data has come through the YourTexasBenefits.com pathway will not require a duplicative §281.071 financial inquiry for enrollment purposes.

Data Sharing and Consent

All three models require applicant consent for HHSC to share YourTexasBenefits.com data with NCHD. Under proposed new §531.0256, the integrated benefits portal application would include a standardized consent authorization informing applicants that their data may be shared with the applicable CIHCP program administrator — for Nueces County applicants, identified specifically as the Nueces Aid Program administered by NCHD. Consent is affirmative and opt-in; refusal does not affect eligibility for any other program.

Photo Identification Gap

The only Nueces Aid Program requirement not covered by YourTexasBenefits.com data is photo identification. NCHD has several options for addressing this efficiently:

- Accept photo ID verification at the time of first clinical encounter (effectively using the care visit as the verification touchpoint)
- Allow telehealth or video-verified ID submission through NCHD's enrollment portal
- Accept school ID, state ID, or other available identification at a brief enrollment appointment, which could be combined with the photo ID verification requirement
- For applicants with a Texas Driver's License or State ID, explore whether DPS data sharing agreements could satisfy the ID requirement without requiring a separate in-person step

Part IV: Comparison with the Current Application

The table below compares the current Nueces Aid enrollment experience with the proposed portal pathway experience:

Factor	Current Process	Portal Pathway
Entry point	NCHD website, NCHD enrollment office, or clinic referral	YourTexasBenefits.com (same portal used for Medicaid, SNAP, TANF)
Application form	Separate NCHD-specific paper or online application	Medicaid application data re-used; no separate Nueces Aid form for most applicants
Income/resource verification	Applicant must separately provide 3 months of pay stubs, bank statements, benefit letters	Already verified by HHSC; transmitted to NCHD with consent
Medicaid ineligibility proof	Applicant must obtain and submit Medicaid denial documentation	Medicaid denial is the trigger; proof is built into the process
Photo ID	Required at application	Single supplemental step; all other data pre-populated
Time from first contact to enrollment	Variable; depends on document collection, which can take weeks	Reduced significantly; data already verified; NCHD contacts applicant within 5 business days of referral
Language access	NCHD provides English and Spanish materials	YourTexasBenefits.com supports English, Spanish, and additional languages
Eligible population reached	Only those who proactively find and contact NCHD	All Medicaid-denied Nueces County applicants whose income/resources are within Nueces Aid limits — systematically identified at the point of denial

Statutory and Program References

- Texas Health and Safety Code §61.052 — General Eligibility Provisions (less restrictive standards authority)
- Texas Health and Safety Code §61.053 — Application Procedure (hospital districts and public hospitals)
- Texas Health and Safety Code §61.0046 [proposed] — Commission Data Sharing with Program Administrators
- Texas Health and Safety Code §61.0047 [proposed] — Automatic Referral to Program Administrator Upon Medicaid Denial
- Texas Health and Safety Code §281.046 — District Responsibility for Medical Aid and Hospital Care
- Texas Health and Safety Code §281.071 — Payment and Support (financial inquiry obligation)
- Texas Health and Safety Code §285.092 [proposed] — Satisfaction of Patient Financial Inquiry Requirement Through Integrated Benefits Portal Data

- Texas Government Code §531.0255 [proposed] — Integrated Benefits Portal — County Indigent Health Care Program
- Texas Government Code §531.0256 [proposed] — Consent Authorization for CIHCP Data Sharing
- NCHD Nueces Aid Program Eligibility Standards — nchdcc.org/nueces_aid/nchd_eligibility.php (current as of August 2026)

###