

Medicaid Matters

Agency budget request goes before legislative committee

Calling Medicaid “the cornerstone of Alabama’s health care infrastructure,” Alabama Medicaid Commissioner Carol A. Herrmann-Steckel asked the members of a joint legislative budget committee on February 1 to approve an additional \$92.6 million for fiscal year 2007 to ensure that the state agency can continue Medicaid services and reimbursement at existing levels. Medicaid’s total request of \$522.9 million from the state’s general fund budget will be considered by the state Legislature during its regular session which runs through April 24.

“Without question, the challenge of how to fund the most basic health care needs of low income children and adults who qualify for Medicaid represents one of the most critical issues to be faced in the upcoming legislative session,” she said.

Commissioner Herrmann-Steckel emphasized that funding Medicaid services impacts all Alabamians. “Without Medicaid revenues, critical components of the state’s health care system would not continue to exist even for those of us blessed to have private insurance,” she told the committee. “In FY 2006, Alabama Medicaid will pay approximately \$3.9 billion for health care services. These expenditures support more than 84,000 jobs within the state.”

Click here to view Commissioner Herrmann-Steckel’s presentation and related budget documents.

Agency assists dual eligibles in getting prescriptions filled

Citing complaints from recipients and providers, Alabama Governor Bob Riley announced that the Alabama Medicaid Agency would advance \$15.7 million to pharmacy providers on January 20 to make sure that “dual eligibles,” or people who have Medicare and full Medicaid coverage, can get their prescriptions filled during the Medicare Part D transition period.

“The implementation of the Medicare Prescription Drug benefit has been very challenging for all of us,” Commissioner Herrmann-Steckel said. “Our full dual eligibles and our pharmacists have experienced the brunt of the difficulties. In spite of guarantees from CMS that ‘no dual eligible will leave the pharmacy counter without their drugs,’ we know that this is not the case.”

The one-time advance payment is designed to ease the financial burden of the Part D transition, including claims processing problems with the new Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs). Any funds advanced will be repaid to the agency later in the year. The amount paid to each pharmacy provider will be based on the amount of prescriptions filled for dual eligibles in December 2005.

Prior to Medicare Part D’s implementation on January 1, 2006, more than 88,000 dual eligibles in Alabama depended on Medicaid to cover most of the cost for their medications.

For more information about Medicare Part D, **click here** to go to Medicaid’s website.



- Inside:**
- ◆ Medicaid’s “Extra Mile” Employee Works to Prevent Fraud and Abuse
 - ◆ Agency Responds to Needs of Hurricane Evacuees
 - ◆ Helpful Resources and Links on Medicaid’s Website

“Extra Mile” Employee Works to Prevent Fraud and Abuse



As a nurse, Elizabeth Bass has always liked order and organization. That same attention to detail in her current position has been responsible for the recovery and repayment of hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars in overpayments and one of many reasons she was named Alabama Medicaid Agency’s “Extra Mile” Award Winner for October-December 2005.

Mrs. Bass has worked for five years as a nurse analyst in the Agency’s Provider Review Unit where her duties involve reviewing medical and claims records of Medicaid providers to determine if overpayments have been made. Her other responsibilities include working as a subject matter expert in review conferences with other state agencies and the Alabama Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud Unit to provide assistance in pursuing fraud and abuse cases.

The Extra Mile Award recognizes Medicaid employees who have gone beyond their assigned job duties. Nominated by a supervisor or a co-worker, the recipient is chosen by a committee of Agency employees. ***Click here for full story***

Alabama Medicaid responds to hurricane evacuee needs

Thousands of hurricane evacuees have turned to the Alabama Medicaid Agency for temporary assistance after evacuating from Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and parts of Alabama due to hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The Agency received federal approval in September for a waiver to provide expedited eligibility and up to five months of temporary coverage for hurricane evacuees who applied by Jan. 31, 2006. The waiver is due to end on June 30, 2006, although coverage for pregnancy-related services may extend beyond that time.

To assist evacuees and providers, the Agency coordinated closely with effected states as well as Alabama providers, state advocates and other state agencies.

Commissioner Herrmann-Steckel expressed appreciation to Governor Bob Riley for his support of the Agency in responding to hurricane victims. “Thanks to the direction and commitment of Gov. Riley, Medicaid’s emergency response plans were implemented immediately which allowed for flexibility in the eligibility, prior authorization and provider enrollment processes.”

Click here for more information about the Alabama Medicaid Agency’s hurricane-related response.

Click here for helpful resources and links on Medicaid’s website:

Applying for Medicaid
Billing Information
Contact Information
Patient 1st Program

Continuing Education Opportunities
News
Medicare Part D
Pharmacy Program

Contact Us: **Recipient Questions & Assistance: 1-800-362-1504**
Provider Assistance (EDS) 1-800-688-7989
Website: www.medicaid.state.al.us

