

Medicaid Matters

Alabama first to add consumer-directed care options to Medicaid State Plan, “Personal Choices” program to offer choice and flexibility

Governor Bob Riley announced May 24 that Alabama is the first state to make consumer-directed care for Medicaid home and community-based services a permanent part of its State Plan. This change will enable nearly 700 older adults and people with disabilities in west Alabama to have greater flexibility and control over the delivery of their personal health care services, Governor Riley said.

Unlike waiver programs which must be renewed periodically, State Plan-approved services become a regular part of the Medicaid program and qualify for federal matching dollars.

“This important change makes consumer-directed care a reality for these individuals. It gives them more choices, more control and more options when it comes to their health care. Alabamians can be proud our state is leading the nation when it comes to providing greater consumer choice,” said Governor Riley.



The state’s “Personal Choices” program was approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as an option for certain individuals in seven West Alabama counties. Those who are part of the Elderly and Disabled waiver and the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) waiver home and community-based waiver programs are eligible to take part in Personal Choices.

Beginning August 1, Personal Choices will be administered by the Alabama Department of Senior Services in Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens and Tuscaloosa counties. The program is a collaborative effort of the Alabama Medicaid Agency, the Alabama Department of Senior Services and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.



Alabama becomes the first state to take advantage of a provision in the federal Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 allowing states to make program changes to help Medicaid recipients live independently in the community.

Under the Personal Choices program, individuals will be provided a monthly allowance from which they will determine what services they need. They may choose to hire someone to help with their care or they may wish to save money for equipment purchases. Financial counselors will be available to guide them through the process which includes developing a budget to help manage the funds designated for their care. In the past, waiver participants were required to choose personal caregivers from a list of approved providers.

The new program is voluntary and will not cost more than the current system, Commissioner Carol Steckel said. Instead it allows eligible Medicaid recipients to be responsible for funds that would have otherwise been spent on their behalf. [Click here for more on the “Personal Choices” program.](#)



Inside: ♦ “Together for Quality” laying groundwork for e-health information system
♦ Betty Payne named Agency’s “Extra Mile” employee for first quarter

Betty Payne is Agency's "Extra Mile" employee for first quarter

When Betty Payne first worked for the Alabama Medicaid Agency in 1975, one of her duties was to use a manual typewriter to issue paper replacement ID cards for recipients. More than 30 years later, Betty was once again involved with the issuance of replacement ID cards. This time, however, it was a high-tech project impacting more than 600,000 recipients that depended in part on her efforts to make sure that the edits on unborn and newborn numbers worked correctly.



While times and her duties have changed, three things have remained constant: Her attention to detail, her thoroughness in getting the job done, and her willingness to help co-workers with their assignments. Together, they represent just a few of the many reasons that Mrs. Payne was named Alabama Medicaid's "Extra Mile" Award winner for January-March 2007. The "Extra Mile" Award is given quarterly to an outstanding Medicaid employee who has gone beyond his/her assigned job duties. Nominated by a supervisor or co-workers, the recipient is chosen by a selection committee of Agency employees.

Currently Associate Director of Policy Management for the Agency's Fiscal Liaison office, Mrs. Payne was recognized for her willingness to see a job through while helping coworkers. One wrote: "She is always willing to assist others through her own research or by teaching...Betty is a true asset to this agency."

Her current duties include oversight of the Agency's claims processing and billing manuals to make sure that they are current plus management of the provider ALERT process, among other duties. During her tenure at the Agency, she has also worked in the Agency's Physicians and Hospital programs. She joined the Fiscal Liaison office in July 1998.

She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Troy State University in Montgomery and currently resides in Letohatchee with Wenton, her husband of 31 years.

Transformation effort laying groundwork for health information system



Thanks to the collaborative efforts of numerous individuals and organizations, "Together for Quality," is laying the groundwork necessary for the development of a statewide electronic health information system in Alabama, according to Medicaid Commissioner Carol Steckel.

Commissioner Steckel praised the efforts of the initiative's five workgroups for their efforts to move the Medicaid transformation effort forward at the May 9 meeting of the TFQ Stakeholder Council. "Members of the five TFQ workgroups – clinical, policy, privacy, technical and finance – have worked to meet the milestones of a very ambitious schedule," she said.

While workgroup members initially focused on organizational and planning issues for the project, representatives of the workgroups are now involved in the evaluation of proposals submitted by 22 vendors in response to a Request for Information issued in April. The RFI is designed to assist the Agency in preparing the documents necessary to procure vendor services in conjunction with the TFQ effort later this year. [Click here for more information about "Together for Quality."](#)

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