

Medicaid Matters

FMAP increase, Health IT funds on stimulus wish list for Alabama

As Congress debates a federal stimulus bill to jump start the nation's economy, Alabama is one of many states hoping that a new infusion of funds will not only help balance the state's budget but will also provide financial support needed to modernize and transform its Medicaid program.

If enacted into law, federal stimulus legislation is expected to provide the impetus and the funds to create and save jobs and to restart the economy through targeted efforts ranging from road and bridge construction projects to educational, energy and technology projects. Cash-strapped states such as Alabama also hope that a proposed increase in the state's federal matching rate, also called the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) will help balance state Medicaid budgets as well.



The FMAP represents the share of state Medicaid benefit costs paid by the federal government and is based on a three-year average of state per capita personal income as compared to the national average. The FMAP for Fiscal Year 2009 – 67.98 percent – is based on the per capita personal income for calendar years 2004-2006.

“Congress is debating and President Obama is supporting significant assistance to states by increasing the FMAP in the stimulus bill,” said Medicaid Commissioner Carol H. Steckel. “This holds great potential for our state because every 1 percent increase in the FMAP provides \$38 million additional dollars to the state, \$31 million directly to the Medicaid Agency, and \$7 million to other state agencies.” A 5 percent increase in the FMAP rate could potentially bring \$150-190 million to the state, she observed. [Read more >>](#)

Alabama Medicaid's Dental Program celebrates a decade of success

Ten years ago Alabama Medicaid knew it had a crisis on its hands with a growing number of children needing dental care and fewer providers participating in Medicaid's dental program. Today, Alabama Medicaid has the 14th highest utilization rate of dental services in the U.S.

The success is in the numbers. Since 1998, utilization of dental services has increased from a low of 25.2 to 41.5 percent, or a 62 percent increase. The number of enrolled providers also increased from 430 dentists to 778, and the number of providers treating at least one Medicaid child increased from 350 to 748 providers—48.1 percent.



The turnaround of the dental program began in late 2000, when the Agency was awarded a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for its *Smile Alabama!* Initiative. This multifaceted campaign was designed to improve access to Medicaid children for routine and preventive dental care through education, increased provider support, and improved reimbursement levels. [Read more >>](#)



- Inside:**
- ◆ College interns get real workday experiences working at Medicaid
 - ◆ Medicaid employees honored for state service totaling 750 years

College interns get real workday experiences working at Medicaid

Alabama Medicaid has some fresh, new faces these days while five Alabama State University interns put their education to work in the real world.

Last fall, two students from the ASU Social Work Department were assigned to the Agency's Beneficiary Services Division. Now, one of those students has returned to continue assisting eligibility staff with applicants and recipients. Four other students from ASU's School of Business are working in areas related to their majors.



Devon Patterson (left) and Ernesto Cortes are two of five ASU interns currently interning at Alabama Medicaid.

"I believe it is very important for those of us that have a passion for public service to get others involved at a very early age," said Medicaid Commissioner Carol Steckel. "The future of the Medicaid Agency and all other state functions rely on our young people becoming familiar with state government and then working in state government. We hope they will consider using their skills to benefit the citizens of this state."

The Agency has worked with several higher education institutions to develop internships for their students in an effort to promote public service as a possibility for those nearing graduation. These efforts include opportunities for social work students from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa and for Auburn University and Samford University pharmacy students as well as ASU students.

[Read more >>](#)

Employees honored for state service totaling 750 years

Forty-four Medicaid Agency employees with a combined total of 750 years of service to the State of Alabama were recognized by Commissioner Carol Steckel in a ceremony held on January 26. Steckel presented 35-year service pins to Hattie Baldwin-Powe and Kay Gibbs, and 30-year service pins to William O. (Bill) Butler and Gloria Hendricks. The commissioner also presented 25-year pins to five staff members, 20-year pins to 14 employees, 15-year pins to six staffers, 10-year pins to 10 employees, and 5-year pins to five employees.



Long time Medicaid employees who received their pins from Commissioner Carol Steckel include Kay Gibbs of Provider Audit, General Counsel Bill Butler and Gloria Hendricks of Information Systems. Not pictured, Hattie Baldwin-Powe.

Contact Us: Recipient Questions & Assistance: 1- 800-362-1504
Provider Assistance (EDS) 1-800-688-7989
Website: www.medicaid.alabama.gov

