

Medicaid Matters

The Alabama Medicaid Agency: 40 years of service to those in need

In many aspects, 1970 was a pivotal year in both the United States and Alabama history. President Nixon lowered the voting age to 18. The Beatles broke up and Michael Jackson's star began to rise. It was the year of Apollo 13 and Kent State, when Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin died and the Public Broadcasting System began. It was also the year in which Sam "Bam" Cunningham rushed for 135 yards and two touchdowns in a 42-21 Southern California romp over Paul "Bear" Bryant's Crimson Tide.

Closer to home, George Wallace was elected to his second term as Alabama governor. And the Alabama Medicaid Agency, signed into law during Lurleen Wallace's governorship, began operations on Jan. 1 to serve the medical needs of the state's poor, elderly and disabled citizens.



Since its inception, the Agency has operated with the purpose of serving those in need while maximizing its limited funds. Unfortunately, funding for the Agency has been a constant obstacle during the past 40 years. Despite this uncertainty, the Agency has been able to serve both the medical needs of the disadvantaged through a variety of innovative programs while substantially funding one of the state's largest industries - health care. [Read More >>](#)

Advisory commission begins work on Alabama HIE strategic plan

The Alabama Health Information Exchange Advisory Commission held its first meeting on Jan. 19 to discuss the state's vision for health information exchange and to begin laying the foundation for the system. The Commission is specifically tasked with the creation of Alabama's HIE Strategic Plan which will create a roadmap of how the exchange will be constructed, implemented and ultimately utilized.



"This system will be for all patients in Alabama. It is not for Medicaid specifically, or Blue Cross specifically, but for all patients, hospitals and doctors," said Kim Davis-Allen, Director of the Alabama Medicaid Agency's Transformation Initiatives Division. "It is a system to take care of our records, including me and you, and it is critical that we have stakeholder involvement in this process." [Read More >>](#)



- ◆ **Express Lane eligibility puts annual Medicaid reviews on fast track**
- ◆ **Radiology Management encourages clinically-appropriate imaging**

Express Lane Eligibility puts annual Medicaid reviews on fast track

Alabama Medicaid has taken the next step in modernizing the enrollment process by implementing a data-sharing initiative, called Express Lane Eligibility (ELE) to streamline and speed up the renewal process for Medicaid-eligible children. ELE lets Medicaid eligibility workers make eligibility redeterminations based on information already available through data systems of other state assistance programs.

“Express Lane Eligibility allows the state to ensure continued access to care, quality of care and better health outcomes for our beneficiaries while at the same time, making our operation more efficient,” said Alabama Medicaid Commissioner Carol H. Steckel.

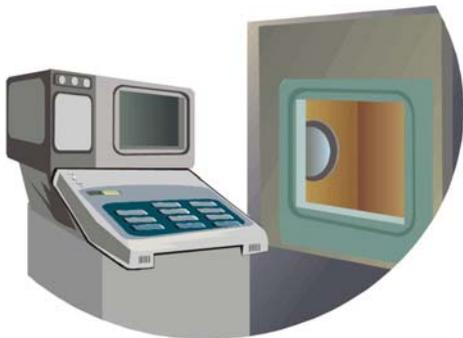
The Agency implemented the new ELE process following approval of an amendment to Alabama Medicaid’s State Plan that went into effect Oct. 1, 2009. ELE allows Medicaid to use income eligibility determinations from other assistance programs to establish Medicaid eligibility for children who are on those programs at the time of the annual Medicaid eligibility review.

Authorized by the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA), the ELE tool improves administrative efficiency, and is another step in modernizing Medicaid’s enrollment system by taking advantage of data-sharing technology. [Read more >>](#)

Radiology Management encourages clinically-appropriate imaging

Initial reports from a new Radiology Management program indicate that Alabama Medicaid is not only achieving its goal to provide clinically-appropriate imaging services, but is saving a significant amount for taxpayers as well.

Implemented in March 2009, the program requires prior review and approval of certain elective outpatient procedures for most Medicaid recipients with full benefit coverage.



Data from the first quarter of operation showed an estimated net savings of \$1 million, according to Alabama Medicaid Commissioner Carol H. Steckel.

“We were very pleased to learn that it has not pushed doctors into doing cheaper tests or to not order necessary tests, but has resulted in more appropriate utilization of CT, PET and MRI scans,” she said.

Medicaid Medical Director Robert Moon, M.D., said it was important to note the more appropriate utilization may not always be a less expensive test.

“Although the average cost per scan actually increased by 13 percent even without a rate change, money was saved because the number of tests ordered decreased 32 percent,” said Dr. Moon.

According to Dr. Moon, data from the 12 months prior to implementation of the new Radiology Management program compared to first quarter program data showed a rise in average cost per scan of nearly \$40, from \$295.94 to \$335.74.

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