

# Medicaid Matters

## Governor Bentley spotlights electronic health records use in Alabama

Electronic health records benefit patients, physicians and other health care providers by improving quality, preventing medical errors, increasing the efficiency of care and reducing unnecessary health care costs. But getting started can be a daunting task, especially for rural physicians, according to Alabama Governor Robert Bentley.

Governor Bentley joined pediatrician Patricia Kendrick-Robinson, M.D., in Selma on July 7 to call attention to a federal incentive program designed to help primary care physicians make the transition to electronic health records. Dr. Robinson is among the first physicians in the state to complete the first step toward “meaningful use” and qualify for the first incentive payment.

“An electronic health record is one tool that a rural physician can use to help treat patients. Physicians who move to a rural area and start a medical practice can still have access to the technology advances as physicians in larger cities use,” Governor Bentley said.



*(Photo courtesy of Jamie Martin, photographer, Governor’s Office.)*

The federally-funded program provides incentive payments to eligible providers, hospitals and federally- qualified rural health clinics based initially on the adoption, implementation or upgrade of an electronic health record system, and eventually, the demonstration of “meaningful use” as defined by the federal government. [Read more >>](#)

## Final design work underway for state Health Information Exchange

With an April 2012 launch date for Alabama’s health information exchange, state officials are moving quickly to transform months of detailed planning into functional, user-friendly design.



The transition from planning to action accelerated in June with the awarding of a \$6 million contract to Thomson-Reuters of Ann Arbor, Michigan, to create the technical infrastructure for the exchange, known as One Health Record.

Implementation will be phased in, starting January 1, 2012, and will continue throughout 2012 with the initial three phases to be complete by January 1, 2013. The project is funded through the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC), the federal agency tasked with development of health information exchanges throughout the United States. The ONC approved Alabama’s Strategic and Operational Plan for *One Health Record* in February 2011.

The technical infrastructure will provide the core service components, operational support, and connectivity that will allow health care providers to use *One Health Record* to securely exchange various types of health information, including clinical data on patients, according to Gary Parker, Alabama’s One Health Record IT Project Director. [Read more >>](#)



**Inside:** • Antipsychotic PA requirements designed to increase patient safety  
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## Antipsychotic PA requirements designed to increase patient safety

Advances in the use of antipsychotic medications have significantly improved the quality of life for many Medicaid recipients. Some people with intellectual disabilities, for example, depend on antipsychotic medications to protect themselves or others from harm. Others benefit from medication that allows them to successfully live in the community. At the same time, these powerful medications can lead to health problems such as diabetes, lipid disorders, and weight gain when used inappropriately.



*Christina Faulkner, PharmD, discusses Agency's prior approval procedures for antipsychotic medications under new guidelines.*

To increase patient safety and appropriate prescribing, the Alabama Medicaid Agency will require prior authorization (PA) of all antipsychotic medications starting October 3, 2011. The PA process will apply to all recipients (children and adults) and all antipsychotics (brand and generic, first and second generation).

“Our goal is not to restrict access to medications patients need, but to ensure that antipsychotic medications are used safely and effectively in this vulnerable population,” said Medicaid Chief Medical Officer Robert Moon, M.D., noting that all antipsychotic medications will continue to be available to prescribers. [Read more >>](#)



### Dr. Mullins attends Mobile Customer Service Center official opening

Commissioner Bob Mullins recently joined employees of the Mobile Customer Service Center to officially celebrate the opening of the new center at 2800 Dauphin Street. The Mobile center is an example of how Medicaid hopes to serve all applicants by offering a storefront, self-service environment that provides access to computers and copiers along with staff to assist in the process. The next customer service center – in Huntsville – is planned for early 2012.

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