

Medicaid Matters

Alabama Medicaid responds to needs of April's Fury tornado victims

Tornadoes are common during the spring in Alabama. No one, however, could have foreseen the unprecedented power and fury of more than 50 tornadoes, straight-line winds and severe storms that killed more than 230 Alabama citizens and destroyed communities large and small across the state during April 2011. The historic weather system, including EF-3, EF-4 and EF5 tornadoes, collectively known as "April's Fury," devastated 42 counties that have since been declared federal disaster areas.



Hackleburg residents try to salvage what they can from debris of homes. (Photo courtesy of Jamie Martin, photographer, Governor's Office.)

Almost immediately after the tornado outbreak on April 27, Medicaid Agency staff implemented emergency measures to minimize any storm-related barriers to care and to seek federal approval to expedite the enrollment of tornado victims.

The tornadoes left tens of thousands of Alabamians displaced from their homes, many without jobs, and many in need of health care, including mental health services to deal with the stress caused by the devastation, according to Medicaid Commissioner R. Bob Mullins, Jr., MD.

"Our state has never seen a natural disaster of this magnitude," he said. "Some of the health care needs were immediate and urgent, caused by physical injury related to the storm or the rescue effort," he said. "However, the psychological complications of post traumatic syndromes, depression, and anxiety may not manifest themselves until later as storm victims deal with monumental cleanup work, lack of mail service, school closures, power outages, unemployment, loss of employer-sponsored health insurance coverage and general life disruption."

To assist current recipients, emergency provisions were made to enable tornado victims to replace or fill prescriptions lost in the storm, to replace eyeglasses and medical equipment, get CT or MRI scans and to help new providers expedite enrollment applications to meet the needs of tornado victims. Other Agency employees went to disaster relief shelters throughout the state to help current Medicaid recipients and applicants complete the necessary forms. [Read more >>](#)



Governor Bentley speaks to joint session of Alabama Legislature about state response to deadly outbreak of tornadoes. (Photo courtesy of Jamie Martin, photographer, Governor's Office.)



Inside: • Legislators cut an additional \$9.7 million from Medicaid budget
• RWJ Foundation selects Alabama for health care reform assistance

Alabama Medicaid Agency P.O. Box 5624 Montgomery, AL 36103-5624

Legislators cut an additional \$9.7 million from Medicaid budget

The reality of Alabama's dire fiscal condition was confirmed May 25 when state legislators passed an austere \$1.77 billion General Fund budget for Fiscal Year 2012 that allocated approximately \$640.5 million for Medicaid, a cut of about \$9.75 million from what had been previously approved. Because of Medicaid's favorable 68 percent federal-32 percent state matching rate, the loss of \$9.75 million from the General Fund means Alabama Medicaid must reduce its overall budget by about \$30 million. The budget now goes to Governor Robert Bentley for his signature.



The newest budget cut widened the gap between the \$700 million the Agency had requested in February to maintain the existing program, to cover the cost of a growing number of Medicaid recipients and to replace federal stimulus funds. If unchanged, the newest budget cuts potentially jeopardize the state Medicaid agency's optional programs - including pharmacy, kidney dialysis and transplants - unless alternatives are found to restore the funds cut from the budget, said Medicaid Commissioner R. Bob Mullins, Jr., MD.

"I agree with the Governor in that I am disappointed in the General Fund budget that was approved by the legislature and will do whatever is necessary to do to provide as much as we can for our recipients," he said. "However, if the money runs out before the end of the year, the optional programs will probably not be paid."

Potential remedies include one or more Executive Amendments to restore the funds by the Governor, or tax breaks for providers to offset any fee cuts that might be required. Both will require legislative approval. Amendments to restore the funds by the Governor, or tax breaks for providers to offset any fee cuts that might be required. Both will require legislative approval. [Read more >>](#)

RWJ Foundation selects Alabama for health care reform assistance

By 2014, Alabama must be ready to implement the major provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), including the enrollment of thousands of Alabama residents in a variety of health insurance programs. Thanks to support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Alabama will have the benefit of expertise from leading national organizations and experts in the field of health policy and coverage as it prepares to meet this challenge.

The technical assistance and other resources are part of the foundation's program to assist states in implementing key health insurance coverage provisions

of ACA. Announced by the RWJ Foundation on May 6, Alabama was one of 10 states selected through a competitive process for the program. Other states selected included Colorado, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island and Virginia. [Read more >>](#)



The RWJ health care grant is addressed during initial work session.

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

