

Medicaid Matters

Alabama Medicaid Commissioner R. Bob Mullins, Jr., M.D., resigns

Alabama Medicaid Commissioner R. Bob Mullins, Jr., M.D., announced his resignation March 26.

Dr. Mullins was appointed Medicaid Commissioner in January 2011 by Governor Robert Bentley following more than 37 years as a family physician in the east Alabama city of Valley. Dr. Mullins has agreed to remain at the Medicaid agency for a short time to facilitate the transition to a new Commissioner.



“There are a number of urgent and compelling issues that must be addressed to maintain the financial health of the state and the overall health of a growing number of Medicaid recipients. I came to this position with a clinical background which is important. However, the current budget environment requires a different set of skills, and I want to give Governor Bentley the opportunity to bring in a person to meet that need,” Dr. Mullins said.

The resignation is effective April 30.

New programs offer expanded array of long-term care choices

Three new programs, announced on March 16 by Alabama Medicaid Commissioner R. Bob Mullins, Jr., M.D., not only mean more choices for elderly and disabled Medicaid recipients, but also illustrate the Agency’s ongoing commitment to providing a “continuum of care.”

“It has not been that long ago that there were only two choices for long-term care: home care or nursing home care. Today, patients and families are asking for more choices. It is also important that we make the best use of the nursing home resources we have available to us.” Dr. Mullins said during a news conference in Mobile at Mercy LIFE, the site of the state’s first PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for Elderly) program.

The three programs include the PACE program for people who would otherwise require nursing home care, the Alabama Community Transition (ACT) waiver to help nursing facility residents move to the community, and a specialized program that will allow ventilator-dependent Medicaid recipients to get care within the state.



Rosetta Robinson of Mobile explains how the PACE Program helped her move from a nursing home to living independently in the community.

Two of the three programs are statewide initiatives, while PACE is currently limited to recipients in Mobile and Baldwin counties who are age 55 or older. The new efforts will be in addition to the Agency’s other programs for Medicaid recipients who qualify for nursing home care, including six home and community based waivers. [Read more >>](#)



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

Early results suggest savings potential for Patient Care Networks

Will it work in Alabama? That was the question on state Medicaid officials' minds when they launched Patient Care Networks of Alabama in August of 2011. Six months later, the first numbers indicate that PCNs not only can improve patient care, but they can save money for the state as well.



Two indicators – the PMPM (per member, per month) rate and the Emergency Room Use Rate – suggest that the program is performing well,” said Robert Moon, M.D., Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Commissioner, Health Systems. He noted that between July 2011 to February 2012, the total PMPM rate for Patient 1st recipients in network areas decreased by 7.7% while the rate for the rest of the state only decreased by .6% or a 7.1% difference.

The networks also appear to be particularly effective in controlling emergency room use. Dr. Moon cited data showing that the three network areas experienced a 15 percent decrease in their ER Use Rate from July 2011 to January 2012. In contrast, the non-network areas had a 2 percent increase in their ER Use Rate from July 2011 to January 2012. [Read more >>](#)

Alabama Medicaid selected for emergency psychiatric project

Medicaid programs in Alabama and in 10 other states and the District of Columbia have been selected by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to test whether Medicaid recipients who are experiencing a psychiatric emergency get more immediate, appropriate care when private institutions for mental diseases (IMDs) receive Medicaid reimbursement for emergency care.

Participation in the Medicaid Emergency Psychiatric Demonstration will also enable Alabama Medicaid to test whether Medicaid reimbursement to treat psychiatric emergencies in IMD settings reduces the burden on general acute care hospital emergency departments. Under current federal law, state Medicaid programs cannot pay for IMD services provided to Medicaid recipients between the ages of 21 and 64.

“Modern medications and therapies make it possible for many patients with mental illness to live successfully in the community. However, when a psychiatric emergency arises, patients often turn to local hospital emergency departments where services may not be matched to their needs or to psychiatric hospitals where the care is appropriate but reimbursement is not provided,” said Jerri Jackson, Associate Director, Institutional Services, who will serve as project coordinator. [Read more >>](#)



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