

Medicaid Matters

Alabama Medicaid to reduce services, provider payments for FY 2012

The Alabama Medicaid Agency will implement reductions in covered services and provider payments starting June 1 in order to balance its budget following the 10.6 percent proration of the state's General Fund budget.



State Health Officer Dr. Don Williamson

Declared in March by Governor Robert Bentley, proration required that the Agency's original \$643 million allocation from the state General Fund be reduced by approximately \$68 million for the current fiscal year which ends September 30, 2012.

The budget reductions were achieved by a combination of administrative and program cost savings, use of one-time funds, voluntary increases in provider taxes and other sources following an in-depth financial analysis led by State Health Officer Dr. Don Williamson. Dr. Williamson was recently chosen by Governor Bentley to conduct a review of Medicaid's operations and finances.

"These are difficult, but necessary cuts that will allow the Agency to operate over the next few months while we look at other ways to reduce costs and reorganize the way we provide care," said Dr. Williamson. [Read more >>](#)

Patient Care Networks win top award for government innovation

A new, locally-led approach to how Medicaid recipients receive medical care has produced savings for state taxpayers and improved care for patients. Now, the implementation of Patient Care Networks has garnered top honors for innovation for the Alabama Medicaid Agency.

The Alabama Medicaid Agency was one of five state and local government organizations honored May 10 as the recipient of a 2012 Innovative Alabama Governments Award from Auburn Montgomery Center for Government and Public Affairs

and the Center for Advanced Technologies. The awards honor select recipients for their use of new and innovative methods to help Alabama state, county, and municipal government agencies reach new levels of efficiency and responsiveness. [Read more >>](#)



A team effort earned Patient Care Networks a prestigious award: (From left) Wendy Dale, Alabama Department of Public Health; Kim Eason, executive director, Care Network of East Alabama; Sylvia Brown, executive director, MedNet West; Chris McMish, associate director, Patient 1st Program; Matthew L. Duke, Ph.D., senior director, Auburn Montgomery Center for Government; Nancy Headley, director, Medicaid Managed Care Division; Kathy Hall, deputy commissioner, Medicaid Program Administration; Gloria Wright, coordinator, Patient 1st Program; and Tina Stevenson, care manager supervisor, MedNet West.



- Alabama first state to add smoking cessation to family planning
- Two achieve Health IT certification through ONC Workforce program

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Alabama first state to add smoking cessation to family planning



To address one of the most preventable causes of infant mortality and improve the overall health of mothers and babies, the Alabama Medicaid Agency has added smoking cessation to its Plan First family planning program, the first state to do so.

The state received federal approval in April to extend the Plan First program through December 31, 2013, and to add smoking cessation counseling and medications to the services now provided, according to Laura Hamilton, associate director of Medicaid maternity and family planning programs.

“Healthy babies are directly related to healthy mothers,” said Hamilton. “It is our goal to help more women stop smoking and improve their personal health before they become pregnant.”

In Alabama, 15 percent of all females smoke while they are pregnant, according to data from the Alabama Department of Public Health. However, estimates of up to 35 percent have been calculated for low-income women with Medicaid coverage. [Read more >>](#)

Two achieve Health IT certification through ONC Workforce program

Two Alabama Medicaid employees are among the first in the state to attain one of six certifications available through the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC). RN Lisa Rogers, a nurse analyst in Medicaid’s Provider Review Unit, and Agency Communications Director Robin Rawls were certified as Implementation Managers after successfully completing a six-month study through Alabama State University and passing a national proficiency exam.

Rogers is a graduate of Troy State University School of Nursing and has been employed with the Agency since 2001. Rawls is a graduate of Tennessee Technological University and Auburn Montgomery. She has been with the Agency since 1989.



Robin Rawls (left) and Lisa Rogers

The certification exams are part of the ONC’s Health IT Workforce Development Program that was established through federal HITECH Act in 2009. The program is designed to help meet the growing demand for health IT professionals by training a new workforce of skilled health IT professionals who will be able to help providers implement electronic health records and achieve meaningful use. The six certification roles include Implementation Support Specialist, Implementation Manager, Technical/software support staff, Trainer, Clinician/practitioner Consultant and Practice Workflow and Information Management Design Specialist.

Multiple free or low-cost training opportunities are available to state residents interested in attaining certification, including a certificate program through Alabama State University in Montgomery and free online classes through Itawamba Community College in Mississippi. [Read more >>](#)

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