

# Medicaid Matters



Acting Commissioner Stephanie Azar (far left) discusses RCO development during a two-day planning session in July.

## Alabama Medicaid Agency moving quickly to comply with new RCO law

Only weeks after Governor Robert Bentley signed a Medicaid reform bill into law, Medicaid staff, stakeholders and others are moving quickly to comply with the law by creating the legal and operational foundation upon which to build the new healthcare delivery system.

The first two challenges under the new law center around determination of actuarially-sound districts and how to facilitate collaboration outlined in the law while remaining within state and federal law, according to State Health Officer Dr. Don Williamson, who is also leading the Medicaid transformation effort.

The proposed districts are based on several factors, according to Dr. Williamson. He explained that in addition to being actuarially sound, the districts were drawn in an effort to honor existing referral patterns and when possible to keep various health systems together.

During the month of June, the Agency met with hospitals, physicians and other provider groups and worked with an actuarial consultant to propose districts for the planned Regional Care Organizations. The map and the required state Administrative Code changes were submitted on June 28. Public input on the new map was received at a public hearing held on July 15 and additional comments were received by the Agency through August 2. [Read more >>](#)

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## Primary care physicians receive more than \$8.8 million due to “bump”

Approximately 2,100 Alabama primary care physicians who qualified for an enhanced federal payment rate known as the “bump,” have received more than \$8.8 million in additional reimbursement since the Alabama Medicaid received federal authorization on May 29.



The Agency began payment of the enhanced rate to qualified providers on June 8 and started reprocessing claims paid under the old rate in July so eligible providers could receive the difference for services provided since January. All reprocessing is expected to be completed by the end of September.

The increased reimbursement is the result of the Affordable Care Act which required state Medicaid programs to increase or “bump” up payments to certain physicians for specified primary care services beginning January 1, 2013. [Read more >>](#)



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## Expedite online system streamlines nursing home application process

A new online application system is helping streamline the process of applying for Medicaid in the Nursing Home. Launched July 1, the [Expedite online application system](#) was designed in response to feedback from nursing home administrators and admissions representatives, Medicaid eligibility staff and recipients. As of July 31, 99 nursing home users located in 75 different facilities had signed up to enter applications online.



“In designing the Expedite system, our goal was to create a system that would be intuitive to the user and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the complex nature of a nursing home application. At the same time, we wanted to simplify the process of entering and tracking an application as it moves through the system,” said Paul McWhorter, Director of Policy and Training for Medicaid Beneficiary Services. [Read more >>](#)

## Stakeholders meet to map out strategies to move MFP project forward

Armed with a new federally-approved operating protocol for the state’s Money Follows the Person initiative, members of the Long Term Care Rebalancing Advisory Committee met July 16 to begin mapping out strategies to support the successful transition of up to 625 individuals over five years from an institutional setting to community living.

The first step will be the formation of sub-committees to address key issues, including outreach, housing and employment for participants who enroll in the program, according to MFP Project Director Ginger Wettingfeld. Committee work is expected to start in August. The Agency will also



*Alabama Nursing Home Association President Richard Brockman (left) and Doris Ball, Director of Adult Protective Services at the Alabama Department of Human Resources, listen as Greg Carlson, Vice President of Planning and Project Management for Glenwood, discusses transitioning into the community.*

pursue development of a second Alabama Community Transition (ACT) waiver to enable Medicaid recipients with developmental disabilities or a mental illness-related diagnosis to have the opportunity to move to the community as well. A timetable has not been established for this project.

“One of the greatest challenges for these recipients is finding safe, affordable and accessible housing,” she said. “In some cases, potential recipients could return to a family

member’s home, but for many, that is simply not feasible. With help from our stakeholders, we hope that communities throughout the state will respond by increasing the inventory of housing that meets the needs of those recipients so they can move safely to the community.”

Alabama is now one of 44 states with MFP initiatives, according to Wettingfeld. [Read more >>](#)

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