

Medicaid Matters

RCO progress exceeds expectations as Agency implements law

A little over a year after state lawmakers passed legislation to transform Medicaid, the Agency is making significant progress toward implementing a new health care delivery system that places greater focus on value and outcomes.

“We are a lot further along than we initially anticipated,” said State Health Officer Dr. Don Williamson, appointed two years ago to lead Medicaid’s transformation.



Dr. Don Williamson

It has also been surprising to see the various approaches potential RCOs have taken, he said. “I can absolutely say that the RCO concept in April 2013 is very different in June 2014. The idea that we are seeing RCOs looking at partners with capital to share risk, or where we see multiple hospitals building a new delivery system for the state, is significant.”

He noted that one of the most important milestones to date was the submission of the Section 1115 Demonstration application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on May 30. The 1115 waiver is critical to Medicaid’s successful transformation, Dr. Williamson explained, because the state lacks the essential infrastructure to operate and oversee the new system, and also because hospitals will need help in making the transition to a new reimbursement system.

“Medicaid and the state of Alabama do not have much experience with managed care, so part of what we are requesting is financial support to build the necessary infrastructure. The other piece that we are concerned about is the potential impact on hospitals, especially those in rural areas. Our 1115 proposal asks for a transition funding pool to help smooth that process,” he said. [Read more >>](#)

Seven groups announce intent to form Regional Care Organizations

Seven groups representing all five regions of the state have filed an official Notice of Intent with the Alabama Medicaid Agency to apply for probationary certification as a Regional Care Organization. The NOI is the first step in the application process.

“I am very pleased that we have received notices of intent from organizations that have announced their intentions to operate a Regional Care Organization in all five regions of the state,” said State Health Officer Dr. Don Williamson, who is also chair of the Medicaid Transition Task Force.

The application period opened in May when the state adopted rules outlining the application process and other requirements. Potential RCOs have until August 1, 2014, to submit their applications. [Read more >>](#)



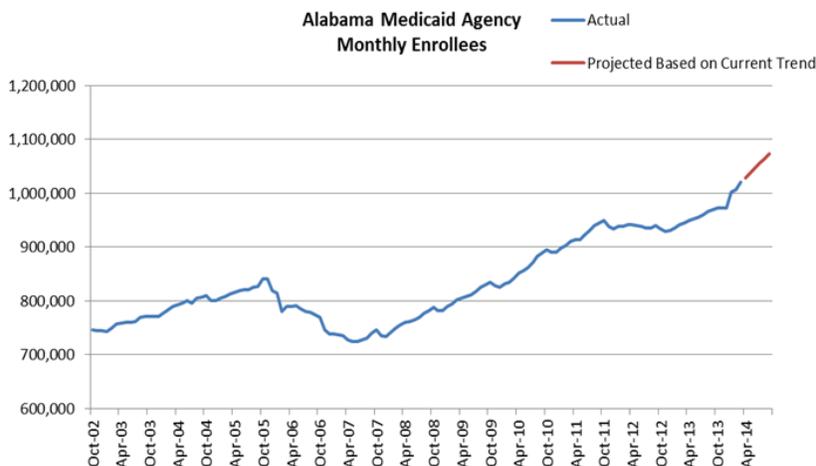
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Alabama Medicaid monthly enrollment tops 1 million for first time

Alabama Medicaid's monthly enrollment topped 1 million for the first time in February 2014, boosted largely by the federally-required transfer of children from the state's All Kids program and changes in how Medicaid eligibility is determined. The milestone increase also reflects the first enrollment of individuals who applied for coverage through the federal "marketplace" under the Affordable Care Act.

In a review of data from the first five months of 2014, Alabama Medicaid's monthly enrollment increased from 997,545 in January to 1,000,824 in February. That number increased to 1,014,931 in March, 1,020,802 in April, and 1,024,358 in May.



Much of the initial increase – 93 percent – was due to the addition of 23,653 children in January who were required to transfer to Medicaid from the state's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The Affordable Care Act required children in families with incomes under 133 percent of the Federal Poverty Level to transfer to Medicaid in January 2014. [Read more >>](#)

Heather Vega named APA State Pharmacy Technician of the Year

Heather Vega, a nationally-certified pharmacy technician on assignment with the Alabama Medicaid Agency, has been named state Pharmacy Technician of the Year by the Alabama Pharmacy



Association. Given annually, the award recognizes APA member pharmacy technicians who demonstrate excellence in performance of their technician duties. The award was presented in June during the APA's annual meeting at Point Clear.

Mrs. Vega has worked with the Alabama Medicaid Agency since 2007 as an employee of Health Information Designs, an Alabama Medicaid contractor, to research and respond to inquiries from pharmacists, technicians, physicians, nurses and patients on pricing and coverage issues. She also assists in the coordination of clinical appeals for children so that their specific needs are met and necessary medications are received in a timely manner.

"I particularly enjoy responding to questions from providers and recipients and to help research and resolve problems," Mrs. Vega said. "I also enjoy the camaraderie and professionalism of my co-workers. I know I could not have won this award without their support and guidance."

Prior to her work with Medicaid, she worked six years with CVS Pharmacy in Montgomery during which time she attained national certification and was promoted to Lead Technician. [Read more >>](#)

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