

Medicaid Matters

Alabama House passes budget with 5 percent cut for Medicaid Agency

Governor Bentley vows veto of “unworkable” budget

A new General Fund budget passed by the Alabama House of Representatives on May 19 not only will derail the Agency’s planned transformation efforts, but potentially will lead to deep cuts and a program that is simply not viable, officials said.

The budget includes a 5 percent cut to the Alabama Medicaid Agency as well as Corrections, Mental Health and Human Resources departments. All other state agencies’ budgets were reduced by 9 percent. Governor Robert Bentley, who has proposed new measures to raise revenue, has stated that the budget in its current form is unworkable and that he will veto it should it reach his desk. None of the governor’s proposed new revenue sources were included in the House’s budget bill.



Dr. Don Williamson, chair of the Medicaid Transition Task Force, emphasized that without adequate state funding, an actuarially-sound managed care program will not be possible. Regional Care Organizations are the cornerstone of the Agency’s planned transformation effort to move the Agency away from a system that has traditionally been based on visits and volume as opposed to outcomes and quality. “With this budget, it becomes financially impossible to move forward with the Medicaid transformation,” he said. [Read more >>](#)

State task force to tackle chronic health problems, access to care



Gov. Bentley addresses Health Care Improvement Task Force.

The Alabama Health Care Improvement Task Force, created April 6 by Governor Robert Bentley, has taken its first steps toward finding potential solutions to some of the state’s most compelling health care challenges.

The 38-member task force is comprised of legislators, physicians, state agency officials, consumer advocates, and health care professionals from around the state. State Health Officer Dr. Don Williamson is chairing the group which is expected to explore possible reform ideas over the next three years and offer suggestions for policy changes to the Governor as early as the 2016 legislative session. The group held its inaugural meeting April 15.

In the executive order filed by Gov. Bentley to create the task force, he cited a shortage of primary care doctors, the prevalence of chronic conditions and the closure of 10 hospitals between 2011 and 2013 as some of the major issues the task force hopes to solve.

“As governor and a physician, the health of Alabamians is extremely important to me,” Gov. Bentley said. [Read more >>](#)



Inside: • Alabama continues implementation of health information exchange
• Online programs offer updates on health homes, RCO-related topics

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

Alabama continues implementation of health information exchange

One Health Record® emerging as important tool for primary care

Every day in Alabama, health professionals and patients exchange information during patient visits and other interactions. With good information, patients' health care needs can be managed effectively. However, this is not always possible despite the proliferation of the Internet, smartphones, tablets and cloud technology.

All that is changing.

Today, One Health Record®, Alabama's Health Information Exchange (HIE), is not only operational, but is emerging as an important tool as Alabama Medicaid and other organizations move toward value-based healthcare systems. The project is now under development as a pilot initiative in eight east Alabama counties where eight hospitals and 19 practices have or are in the process of connecting to have data exchange capability. Between February and May of 2015, more than 260 individual users sent and received approximately 1128 secure messages while nearly 54,000 query transactions to pull data were recorded.



The move to implement health data exchanges nationally has been fueled by Medicare, and private insurers as emphasis shifts to quality and outcomes over visits and volume. Medicaid's planned Regional Care Organizations hope to incorporate the HIE system as well. [Read more >>](#)

Online programs offer updates on health homes, RCO-related topics

Medicaid providers and others can now take advantage of an ongoing educational series to learn more about the Agency's Health Home program as well as topics related to Regional Care



Alabama Medicaid's Carolyn Miller conducts a webinar.

Organizations. The "Wednesday Webinars" began in February to answer providers' questions about the new, statewide Health Home program as well as different aspects of the planned Regional Care Organizations.

The next webinar will be held on June 17 at noon and will feature State Health IT Coordinator Paul Brannan, who is also director of One Health Record®, the state's health information exchange. He will discuss how providers can augment their existing record systems with this free technology resource and plans for the future of this secure

system. Login information will be available on the home page of the Agency's website the week of the program.

While each webinar is live, the slides presented and a recording are also available after each session on the Agency's website at http://www.medicaid.alabama.gov/CONTENT/2.0_Newsroom/2.7.3.2_RCO_Meetings_grid.aspx.

Suggestions for upcoming sessions are welcomed and should be directed to Robin Rawls, communications director, at robin.rawls@medicaid.alabama.gov.

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

