

ALABAMA MEDICAID AGENCY
Medical Care Advisory Committee

MINUTES
March 18, 2021

Present

Commissioner Stephanie McGee Azar	Danne Howard
Monica Abron	Mark Jackson
Jeff Arrington	Louise Jones
Sophie Arrington	Bob Kurtts
William Blythe, MD	Morissa Ladinsky
Kimberly Boswell	Linda Lee
Jean Brown	Stephanie Lindsay
Nancy Buckner	Paul McWhorter
Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw	Drew Nelson
Cathy Caldwell	Kelly Littlejohn- Newman
Barry Cambron	Flake Oakley
Jim Carnes	Sharon Parker
Melanie Cleveland	Bakeba Raines
Marie Dean	Marsha Raulerson
Gretel Felton	Melinda Rowe MD
Mary Hayes Finch	Danny Rush, DDS
Nina Ford Johnson, MD	Annie Smith
Lauren Gordon	Johnathan Sorter, Pharm. D
Kathy Hall	Jean Stone
James Hardin	Judy Thomas
Nate Horsley	Ginger Wettingfeld
Lindsey Harris	Dave White

Call to Order/ Opening Remarks at 2:00pm:

Commissioner Stephanie McGee Azar welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened with introductions. She began by announcing that, effective May 3, 2021, Dr. Christopher Stanley, an obstetrics-gynecology physician, will be joining Alabama Medicaid as the new Medical Director.

She also announced that the Alabama Medicaid Agency will increase their COVID-19 vaccine administration fee rate to \$40 as described by the American Rescue Plan Act. Program areas will provide more information at a later date.

Finally, she reminded everyone that the Alabama Legislature will be on Spring Break next week. At this point, the Agency is optimistic regarding its funding request.

Information Technology Update

Mason Tanaka introduced the Alabama Medicaid Modernization Program (AMMP), a multi-step system upgrade intended to overhaul the current Medicaid Management Information

System (MMIS). In State Medicaid Director Letter (SMDL) #16-010, The Center for Medicaid and Medicaid Services (CMS) mandated all states with an approved Medicaid program comply with federal standards and conditions, which includes modularizing their current MMIS. He explained that the MMIS currently in use is managed by Gainwell Technologies and it is built on a platform which is over 30 years old. This MMIS is cumbersome, difficult to implement and expensive to maintain. He shared that the objective of AMMP is to replace this singular, monolithic system with a system of smaller interoperable systems centered on a shared integration hub, where one of the smaller systems can be changed or replaced without affecting any of the other systems. He mentioned CMS is encouraging states to reuse technical solutions already in use in other states and they are also encouraging states to use commercial off the shelf software rather than build a completely new system. He shared that, during the modularity overhaul, Alabama Medicaid will be reviewing internal business processes to determine if functionality in any areas can be improved. He also announced that the modularity overhaul is being overseen by an Organizational Change Management (OCM) team, which will be responsible for outreach, presentations and training for any and all new business processes. AMMP is a multi-year project that will require a coordinated effort within every division of Alabama Medicaid. Finally, he shared that Medicaid will regularly keep providers informed on status of the program, and will also notify providers of any anticipated impact to the Provider community. As new systems becoming implemented, training will be made available to providers, and the Medicaid Help Desk will be available to assist throughout the transition the new systems and beyond.

Medical Services Update

Beth Huckabee shared that Alabama Medicaid has posted information through Provider Alerts regarding the coverage of COVID-19 vaccine administration codes. This applies to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, and information on the Janssen vaccine administration code will be posted soon. Medicaid is also working to update the claims system with rate changes to the vaccine administration codes. Program areas will continue to monitor for future vaccine administration procedure codes.

She also shared that Alabama Medicaid has submitted an 1115 demonstration waiver seeking authority to reimburse for acute inpatient stays in institutions for mental diseases (IMDs) for Medicaid eligible individuals ages 21-64 with a serious mental illness (SMI). While this waiver of state wideeness seeks to target the unique inpatient behavioral health access issues currently present in Mobile, Washington and Baldwin counties, the State proposes to limit reimbursement to IMDs operating in these counties. Medicaid eligible individuals in need of inpatient behavioral health services would be able to access services via the IMDs participating in the Demonstration, regardless of their county of residence. The waiver was submitted to CMS earlier this month and will be effective October 1, 2021 if approved. A copy of the waiver is available on the Medicaid website.

She announced that in January 2021, Alabama Medicaid submitted a State Plan Amendment (SPA) to change the adult eyeglass services from one exam every three calendar years to one exam every two calendar years. Medicaid is currently waiting on a response from CMS. If it is approved, it will be effective January 1, 2021.

Finally, she shared that Alabama Medicaid is working in conjunction with the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, ALL Kids, and the Alabama Chapter of Pediatrics to implement the Reach Out and Read Program. Reach Out and Read is a 30 year old national program in which pediatric health care providers are trained to incorporate the use of an age appropriate, culturally sensitive new book to be given to the child during their well child exam and used by the provider as a tool for assessment and guidance. The provider models reading the book aloud to the child, helps the parent understand the importance of language and development skills, and gives a prescription for reading aloud. Jefferson, Macon, Marshall, Monroe, and Randolph counties in Alabama are being reviewed for pilot programs. The collaboration is still in the works so more information will become available at a later date. The program is anticipated to begin sometime early this summer.

Pharmacy Update

Kelli Littlejohn-Newman provided an update for the pharmacy program related to COVID-19 vaccinations. The administration fee will be increased to \$40 per dose, in accordance with CMS updates. In addition, the Agency will soon allow pharmacy and pharmacist identification numbers to be processed on COVID-19 vaccines in accordance with the recent Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act. Finally, effective March 1, 2021, the clinical criteria has been updated to remove fibrosis scores on drugs used for Hepatitis C. All other criteria remains the same, with the exception that urine drug screenings and sobriety requirements will no longer be required for children.

Communications Update

Melanie Cleveland provided an overview of the Agency's Provider Insider newsletter. The newsletter is distributed quarterly (January, April, July and October) and provides highlights or a summary of the Provider ALERTs that have been sent out over the past three months. It also discusses the most important issues affecting providers. The Medicaid Communications Division is emailing a brief survey to providers to gain feedback about the newsletter and determine the topics providers would like included.

Integrated Care Network Update

Ginger Wettingfeld provided an update on the Integrated Care Network (ICN) program, which is now entering its third year. She described the goal of the ICN was to prepare for the incremental change to Medicaid's long term care system in the State of Alabama due to an anticipated increased need in five to seven years and to provide case management services to most Medicaid long term care recipients in both Home and Community (HCBS) and institutional settings. She described the challenges the ICN experienced during its first year of program implementation and announced that the program had met and exceeded its benchmark. She then provided an overview of the unique challenges the ICN experienced during its second year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and announced that the program was also able to meet the benchmark for the second year. She described the program goals for the third year of the ICN program, including the ICN having more control at the case management level and waiver modifications made to refill more slots per year. Finally, she announced the acuity quality incentive was expected to begin in January 2022.

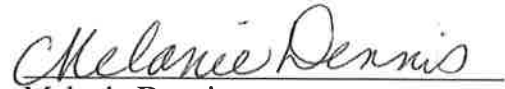
Open Forum

The Medical Care Advisory Committee Members discussed adding a letter to the Medical Care Advisory Committee meeting minutes in support of Medicaid expansion.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:25p.m.


Stephanie McGee Azar
Commissioner


Melanie Dennis
Recording Secretary