State of Alabama
Alabama Medicaid Agency
501 Dexter Avenue
P.O. Box 5624
Montgomery, AL 36103-5624
Revised 9/2008

**Keep this booklet!
It's your guide to
Patient 1st!**

Your Guide to..

Read all about Patient 1st!

- **What it is**
- **How it works**

Welcome to Patient 1st!

Please read this booklet!

It tells you about the Patient 1st program.

Fill in your doctor's name and phone number below:

Important Information:

My Personal Doctor:

_____

Telephone Number: _____

My Children's Personal Doctor(s):

_____

_____

Telephone Number(s): _____

_____

Patient 1st Recipient Call Center

1-800-362-1504
alrcchelp@eds.com

Fraud and Abuse

Federal rules require that Medicaid make every effort to identify and prevent fraud, abuse, or misuse of the Medicaid program. For information on fraud and abuse, see the Fraud and Abuse Section of the Medicaid Covered Services Booklet.

If you think another Medicaid recipient or a Medicaid provider may be abusing or defrauding the program please report it to the Alabama Medicaid Agency. The toll-free number for reporting fraud or abuse is 1-866-452-4930. You do not have to give your name or pay for the call.

Tips for getting the most from Patient 1st

- Always call your personal doctor first. Your Patient 1st personal doctor (or a qualified person chosen by your doctor) can be reached by telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Ask your doctor's office for a number to call after hours. Use this number if your problem is serious, but not life threatening.
- The only time you should go to the emergency room is when you have a real emergency. **Remember:** Your personal doctor must okay your ER visit or Medicaid may not pay for it.
- Always bring your Medicaid card with you to the doctor. If you lose your card, call 1-800-362-1504 for a new card.
- Keep your appointments. If you know that you cannot keep your appointment, call and let your doctor know.
- Make sure you know who your personal doctor is before getting a referral to go to another doctor. If you do not know who your personal doctor is, then call 1-800-362-1504.
- If you don't have a way to get to the doctor, call 1-800-362-1504 for help with a ride to your doctor's office.
- You can also find more information on Medicaid's website at **www.medicaid.alabama.gov**

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What is Patient 1st?

Patient 1st helps you get the health care you need

- You and your children will have your own personal doctor or clinic, close to your home.
- Your Patient 1st personal doctor (or a qualified person chosen by your doctor) can be reached by telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- Your personal doctor will be the doctor or clinic that you and your children will go to for most of your health care.
- All your medical records will be at one place.
- You will always call your personal doctor first before you go to the emergency room, unless you have a real emergency.

Medicaid will only pay for visits if you have not used up all of your doctor visits.

The treatment must also be a covered service in order for Medicaid to pay for it.

Other questions you may have

What if I need to see my doctor?

If you need to see your doctor for a checkup or because you are sick or hurt, call your personal doctor to set up a time for an office visit.

What if I have to go to the emergency room?

If you have a real emergency, then you will go to the emergency room (ER). A real emergency is when you have a serious health problem that could cause lasting injury or death. If you are not sure it is an emergency, then call your personal doctor first. **If the problem is not a real emergency, you may have to pay for the ER visit.** (See pages 14-15 for more information.)

Can I change doctors?

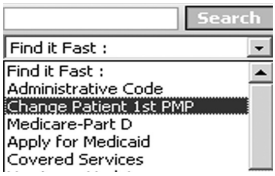
Yes. You are free to pick any doctor as your personal doctor as long as he or she sees Patient 1st patients from your county and has not reached his or her limit of Patient 1st patients. If you change your Patient 1st doctor before the 15th of the month, then you can visit your new doctor the first day of the next month.
(See page 5 for more information.)

Other questions you may have

You can change your Patient 1st doctor by:

- calling 1-800-362-1504 toll-free
- sending an e-mail to **alrcchelp@eds.com**
- writing to EDS at 301 Technacenter Drive; Montgomery, AL 36117
- faxing a request to (334) 215-4140
- visiting **www.medicaid.alabama.gov**
  - ✓ Look for the Find It Fast pull-down menu
  - ✓ Click the down arrow
  - ✓ Click **Change Patient 1st PMP**

    - A page will appear to give you choices about changing your Patient 1st doctor



What if I have questions?

If you have questions about Medicaid's Patient 1st program, call 1-800-362-1504, send an e-mail to alrcchelp@eds.com or visit www.medicaid.alabama.gov for more information.

Health care and your personal doctor

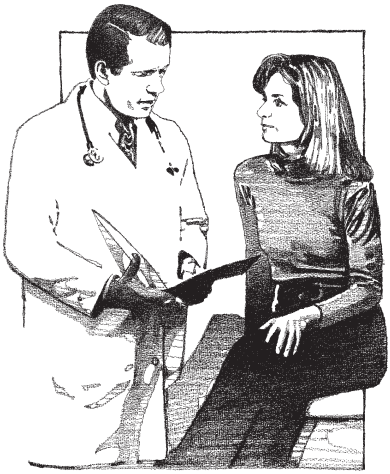
You will see your personal doctor for most of your health care. Except in a few cases, you will **always** call your personal doctor first for health care, including:

- Doctor visits
- Well child health screenings (checkups)
- Outpatient hospital visits
- Visits to a rural health or federal clinic
- Visits to a public health department
- Visits for medical eye care
- Speech, physical or occupational therapy
- Visits to a chiropractor or podiatrist
- Hearing exams given by an audiologist
- Private duty nursing
- Durable medical equipment and supplies

If your personal doctor orders special tests or care from another doctor, then he or she will give you a referral. Medicaid will pay for these visits **only** when the care is given, set up, or approved by your personal doctor with a referral. (See page 7 for more information.)

Referrals

A referral is an okay from your personal doctor for you to go to another doctor, clinic or place. Medicaid will pay for services **only** when the care is given, set up, or approved by your personal doctor.



Before going to another doctor, clinic or place for care:

- Be sure you have a referral from your personal doctor. If you don't know who your personal doctor is, then call 1-800-362-1504.
- Be sure you have not used up all of your doctor visits.
- Be sure your treatment is a covered service.
- Be sure to call your personal doctor before going to the ER, unless it is a real emergency. (See pages 14-15 for more information.)

If you go to another doctor, clinic, or place without a referral from your personal doctor, then you may have to pay for that visit.

Keeping appointments with your doctor

■ Always keep or cancel your appointments

When you make an appointment to see your personal doctor, you should keep it or call to cancel. When you make an appointment to visit the doctor, that time is just for you. When you make an appointment and don't go, you keep another person from seeing the doctor. One day that person might be you! Call if you cannot come to your appointment.

■ Be on time

If you are not able to get to your appointment on time, call and let your doctor know you will be late. Call the doctor's office as soon as you know that you will not be on time.

■ Call early to cancel

If you need to cancel your appointment, call your doctor and cancel at least 24 hours **before** the appointment. Even if you cannot give 24 hours notice, be sure to call your doctor and cancel the appointment.

More about keeping your doctor appointments

- **If you don't have a way to the appointment, call.** If you need a ride to your doctor appointment, call 1-800-362-1504 for help with a ride. You need to call at least five days before your appointment, if possible.

- **Not showing up for your appointments may mean that your doctor can dismiss you and ask Medicaid to find another Patient 1st doctor for you.** If you frequently miss your appointments or don't show up for your appointments, your doctor has the right to dismiss you and ask Medicaid to find another Patient 1st doctor for you.

As a member of Patient 1st and Medicaid, you have rights

Medicaid is a voluntary program. This means that you agree to be a part of Medicaid and to follow Medicaid's rules. This also means you have the following rights when you are on Medicaid's Patient 1st program.

You have the right:

- To be able to get in touch with your personal doctor (or a qualified person chosen by your doctor) 24 hours a day.
- To pick your own personal doctor from the list of doctors who see Patient 1st patients from your county.
- To change your personal doctor. If you want a doctor other than the one assigned to you or you want to change the doctor you have been seeing, call 1-800-362-1504. (See pages 4-5 for more information.)
- To go to any doctor or clinic for birth control (family planning) without getting approval from your personal doctor. You do not have to use your personal doctor for birth control or any family planning services.
- To go to the emergency room right away if you have a real emergency. A real emergency is a serious health problem that could cause lasting injury or death. If you are not sure if it is a real emergency, then call your personal doctor first.
- To be told what your illness or medical problem is and what the doctor thinks is the best way to treat it and to receive information about treatment options and alternatives in a manner that is appropriate to your condition and that you understand.

More about your rights

- To decide about your health care and to give your permission before surgery or the start of any treatment.
- To have the personal information in your medical records kept private, to request and receive a copy of your medical records and to request that these records be corrected.
- To report to Medicaid any complaint or grievance about your doctor or your medical care. If you have a complaint or grievance, you may call 1-800-362-1504. A Medicaid representative will work with you to correct problems you may have with your personal doctor and/or the care you have received. Medicaid will act on your complaint within 14 days of receiving it.
- To be treated with respect, dignity and privacy.
- To receive assistance with interpretation service by calling 1-800-362-1504.
- To **not** be forced into making decisions about your treatment. This includes any form of restraint or isolation.

- To **not** be discriminated against due to race, color, national origin, health status or the need for health care services.

When you are part of Patient 1st and Medicaid, you have duties

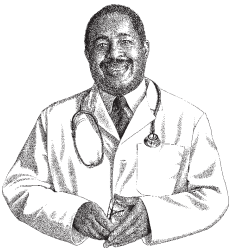
Medicaid is a voluntary program. This means that you agree to be a part of Medicaid and to follow Medicaid's rules. This also means you have the following duties when you are on Medicaid's Patient 1st program.

You have the duty:

- To follow the rules for Medicaid and Patient 1st.
- To follow the rules set up by your personal doctor for his or her office. This includes showing respect and courtesy to the doctor, his or her employees, and other patients and their families.
- To call your personal doctor first before going to another doctor or clinic or to the emergency room if it is not a real emergency.
- To give as many facts as you can to help your doctor or other health care provider take care of you. For example, it is important to your health to tell your doctor about all the medicines you take. (You may want to take all your medicine bottles with you to the doctor.)
- To call your doctor or clinic and let them know if you cannot come to an appointment.
- To follow the instructions you get from your personal doctor or clinic.
- To ask questions about anything you do not understand. (See page 13 for some additional rules your personal doctor may have.)

Some rules your doctor might have

- Treat others with respect and courtesy. This means showing respect and courtesy to the doctor, his or her employees, and other patients and their families. This also means you are to answer questions with courtesy, follow directions and otherwise do what is asked of you while you are in the doctor's office.



- Do not bring food or drink into the office.
- Bring only one visitor with you while you wait in the office.
- Pay for any medical services not covered by Medicaid.

Your Patient 1st personal doctor has the right to ask you to follow the rules for the office or clinic.

This also applies to any visitors or relatives who come with you or your child. If you (or others with you) **do not** follow the rules:

- Your doctor has the right to ask that you (or your child) be assigned to another Patient 1st personal doctor.
- You may not be able to find a doctor who will see you (or your child). This may cause you to have to pay for your medical care.
- You may lose your Medicaid for serious problems, such as acting in a rude, mean or threatening way to the doctor or to a person who works for the doctor. This includes fighting, using profanity or other abusive words, carrying a weapon while at the doctor's office or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

When you are sick or hurt

It's normal to worry when you or someone close to you is sick or hurt. Sometimes it is hard to know what to do. You may wonder what your choices are.

Because you are worried, you may want to go right away to the emergency room. **The emergency room (ER) may not be the best place to go.** You may wait a long time. You may have to fill out a lot of papers. You may have to have extra tests since your health records are back in your doctor's office. And, if the health problem is not a real emergency, you may have to pay for the ER visit.

If I don't go to the emergency room, what can I do?

You have several good choices:

- Call the doctor to find out what to do
- Follow the directions that your doctor gave you
- Make an appointment to come to the doctor's office for a visit

If you are not sure what to do, call your doctor's office. Your Patient 1st personal doctor (or a qualified person chosen by your doctor) can be reached by telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Emergency Room is for serious health problems

The emergency room (ER) is for serious health problems that can cause lasting injury or death. The ER is **NOT** for health problems that the doctor can take care of in his or her office.

When there is a real emergency, you should:

- Call your personal doctor first or have someone call for you. Ask your doctor's office for a number to call after hours. Use this number if your problem is serious, but not life threatening—like your child throwing up.
- Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if there is a bad injury, sudden illness, or an illness that is quickly getting worse.

Calling your personal doctor or clinic first can save time and may shorten your wait at the hospital. This allows your doctor to call ahead so the ER is ready for you.

When you call your doctor, you may find that you do not need to go to the ER. It may be that you can get care more quickly at your doctor's office because all of your health records are there.

Calling your doctor first may also save you money. Your doctor must okay your emergency room visit. And, if your health problem is not a real emergency, you may have to pay for the ER visit.

The only time you should go to the emergency room is when you have a real emergency. If you are not sure what to do, call your doctor first. (See pages 16-17 for tips on calling your doctor.)

Calling your doctor

Your Patient 1st personal doctor (or a qualified person chosen by your doctor) can be reached by telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Call your doctor:

- **During office hours** for help with routine problems such as a baby who will not eat a certain food, getting medicine refilled, teething, colds, rashes, upset stomach or other smaller health problems. These problems can be handled best during office hours since all of your records are at the office. These are problems that can wait until the doctor's office opens again.

- **After office hours and on the weekend** for problems that **cannot wait** until the doctor's office opens again.

When you call your doctor

- **Be patient. Your doctor may not be able to call you back right away**. If it is during office hours, your doctor may be taking care of other patients. If it is after hours, he may not be close to a telephone. If you do not hear from your doctor in about one hour, it is okay to call him or her again. Always tell the office if you think it is an emergency.

- **Be ready to talk about your health problem.**

  Some things your doctor will want to know:

  - How long have you been sick or hurt?
  - Do you have pain? Where is it?
  - Do you have a fever? What is your temperature?
  - What medicines do you take?

- **Be ready** to write down what the doctor or nurse says to do.

- **Know what drugstore you want to use in case the doctor wants to call in some medicine.** Have the drugstore's phone number ready to give the doctor. This will help you get your medicine faster.

- **Listen carefully and ask questions** about anything you do not understand. Be sure you know what you are supposed to do.

When your newborn baby is sick

Newborn babies (babies who are less than one month old) have special health needs. Before you leave the hospital or when you take your baby for his or her first checkup, find out how your doctor wants you to handle any problems that come up.

If you are a new parent, you may feel scared if your baby seems sick. In most cases, you can take care of your baby's health needs at home. If you have a problem or question about taking care of your baby, call your doctor during office hours.

There are times you should always call your doctor about your newborn. Try to call during office hours whenever possible.

Call your baby's personal doctor if he or she is less than one month old and:

- Has a fever of any kind
- Won't breastfeed or take a bottle of formula
- Vomits (throws up) a lot over several hours
- Has diarrhea (many watery bowel movements) in a short period of time
- Cries for a long time for no reason
- Has any yellow coloring of his or her skin or eyes
- Has trouble breathing
- Seems sick or acts strange

If you are not sure, call your doctor.

Always call your child's personal doctor before taking your child to the emergency room (ER). If your child's health problem is not an emergency, you may have to pay for the ER visit.

When your older child is sick

Almost all children get sick at one time or another. Colds, ear infections and stomach viruses are common, especially in younger children. Children often hurt themselves as they play.

Most of the time, you can care for your child's health problems at home. Other times, you may need to call the doctor for advice or to make an appointment.

When you take your child for his or her checkups, find out how you should take care of your child when he or she has:

- Fever
- Stomach ache or pain
- Earache
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Diarrhea (many watery bowel movements in a short time)
- Colds and sore throats
- Rashes
- Poisoning
- Cuts, burns and scrapes

It is best to call about your child's health problems during office hours. This is usually the quickest way to get help.

Always call your child's personal doctor before taking your child to the emergency room (ER). If your child's health problem is not an emergency, you may have to pay for the ER visit.

Be ready for health problems at home

Almost everyone gets sick or hurt at home at one time or another. These are problems that you can take care of most of the time.

Be ready for small health problems by having these things where you can find them quickly:

- Thermometer to check for fever
- Hydrogen peroxide to clean cuts and scrapes
- Antibiotic or first aid cream to put on cuts and scrapes
- Anti-itch cream for small rashes
- Non-aspirin pain reliever (acetaminophen) for adults and children
- Stick-on bandages
- Medicine for upset stomach and diarrhea
- Ice pack
- Heating pad

You can get these items at the drugstore for very little cost. Having these things at home will save you time and trouble when you or your child is hurt or sick. Ask your doctor if there are other things he or she would like you to keep on hand.

Taking medicine the right way - for yourself

If your doctor gives you a prescription, be sure to take all of it (even if you get better or seem well) unless the doctor tells you differently. **NEVER** give your prescription to another person.

Whether your doctor prescribes a medicine for you or you buy it off the shelf at the drugstore, be sure you follow your doctor's instructions exactly.

If you don't understand, ask! (For example, ask the doctor or nurse what it means when the bottle says, "three times a day." Does it mean three times a day while I'm awake? Or, does it mean every eight hours?)

Give the medicine time to work – It may take a day or two before you start to feel better.

If you are pregnant

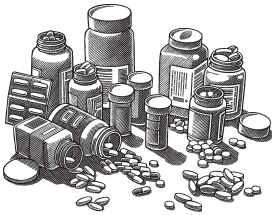
Always talk with your doctor before taking a prescription medicine or an over-the-counter medicine. A safe amount of medicine for mom may be too much for baby.

Remember to tell the doctor if you are allergic to any medicine.

Taking medicine the right way - for children

If your doctor prescribes medicine for your child, be sure to give the right amount. Do not guess at how much to give because it could be dangerous, especially for a young baby.

For example: One teaspoon is equal to 5 cc or 5 ml. This is not the same as a teaspoon that you eat with. If you do not measure the medicine out, your child may not get all the medicine he or she is supposed to or your child may get too much medicine.



Don't put medicine in your baby's bottle because your baby may not get all the medicine he or she should get.

Whether your doctor prescribes a medicine for your child or you buy it off the shelf at the drug store, be sure you follow your doctor's instructions exactly. If you don't understand, ask! (For example, ask the doctor or nurse what it means when the bottle says, "three times a day." Does it mean three times a day while the child is awake? Or, does it mean every eight hours?)

Remember to tell the doctor if your child is allergic to any medicine.

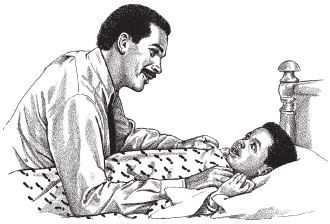
More about taking medicine the right way - for children

When your child takes medicine the right way it will help him or her get well or feel better more quickly.

Give the medicine time to work. It may take a day or two before your child starts to feel better.

If you have trouble getting your child to take medicine, call your doctor during office hours for help.

If your doctor gives you a prescription for your child, be sure to give all of it (even if your child gets better or seems well) unless the doctor tells you differently. **NEVER** give one person's prescription to another person.



Remember:

- Give medicine the right way – exactly the way the doctor prescribed it. Don't double the dose just because your child seems sicker than last time.
- Never let children take medicine by themselves.
- Never call medicine "candy" to get your child to take it. Your child may remember you called it candy and take the medicine without your knowing it.

Notes