

## **Texas Update - December 2007**

*Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for 2008!*

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### **Attorney General's Office Awards \$250,000 Each to Eight Health Centers!**

Thanks to the Attorney General and CONGRATULATIONS to the health centers who received \$250,000 grants to provide health care services to indigent populations. The awards were announced on Thursday December 20 and are funded through a 2007 settlement agreement between the Attorney General and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas. The centers receiving awards are:

Regence Health Network, Plainview  
Good Neighbor Healthcare Center, Houston  
Los Barrios Unidos Community Clinic, Dallas  
Communicare Health Centers, San Antonio  
Centro San Vicente, El Paso  
Community Health Development, Inc., Uvalde  
Longview Wellness Center, Longview  
Fort Bend Family Health Center, Richmond

The settlement also included three awards of \$500,000 each to Dell Children's Medical Center in Austin, Driscoll Children's Hospital in Corpus Christi, and the Children's Medical Center Dallas also to provide charitable health care services for indigent families.

### **NPI Attestation - Contingency Period Ends Soon!**

As the state moves from the current TPI (Texas Provider Identifier) system into the new NPI (National Provider Identifier) system for Medicaid billing, all Medicaid providers and practices must attest to NPI data for each of their current TPIs. The contingency period, during which providers may bill under their NPI or TPI numbers ends on February 29, 2008. Beginning March 1, only NPI numbers will be accepted for billing. Attesting your NPI, in other words - linking your TPIs to your new NPI in the TMHP system, is crucial to avoid disruptions in your Medicaid reimbursement.

That isn't the only deadline to be aware of, however. If you are the **assigned Primary Care Provider (PCP)** for Medicaid patients at your center, you must attest your NPI with TMHP by **FEBRUARY 5, 2008**. *If you do not, your panels may be reassigned.*

#### Resources for NPI Attestation

- <http://www.tmhp.com/C13/NPI%20Announcements/default.aspx> - this link will direct you to TMHP's latest information about the NPI attestation process and deadlines.
- TMHP Bulletins:
  - [202 NPI Special Bulletin Acute Care](#), January 2007 - walks providers through the online attestation process. This process should take no more than 10 minutes.
  - [205 NPI Special Bulletin Acute Care](#), June 2007 - provides clarifications for the 202 Bulletin
  - [212 Texas Medicaid Bulletin](#), January/February 2008 - announces the end of the TPI contingency period and details *consequences* for not attesting NPIs in a timely manner.

#### Further Items to Note

- When attesting NPIs for individual providers at your health center, only attest to NPIs for providers who are *actively* performing services for you now.
- For those of you who use third party billing contractors, TMHP recommends that you check the [EDI](#) section of their website to verify that your vendor has gone through the electronic testing with TMHP to ensure their systems can handle the NPI transition. If your third party billing vendor is not named on the "Completed Testing" list, please contact your vendor and ask them to start this process.

Questions? Contact your TMHP provider representative, the TMHP call center, or TACHC.

#### Texas to Take Medicaid Smart Card Project Statewide

After a two year pilot in six Texas counties, HHSC has announced that it will be expanding its Medicaid Smart Card pilot project statewide. The "smart cards" will resemble credit cards and take the place of the paper cards Medicaid beneficiaries are mailed each month. Each card will hold eligibility and identity information for the Medicaid client, and this information will be verified at the provider's office by the use of finger imaging technology. Ideally, the new system will reduce Medicaid fraud by both patients and providers. The state hopes to have the statewide system for this program in place by the second half of 2009. What isn't clear at this point is how the state will get finger imaging technology into the hands of every Medicaid provider, what training they intend to implement, and what impact this technology will have on the Medicaid patients. Finger imaging is heavily associated with law enforcement, and at least one concern is how the state plans to implement the program for children, particularly U.S. citizen

children of undocumented parents. TACHC will be watching the implementation of this program closely.

### **Efforts Still Afoot to Determine the Impact of the Citizenship Documentation Requirement in Medicaid on Health Centers and Health Center Patients**

George Washington University (GWU) is conducting a follow-up survey on the effects of the Medicaid citizenship documentation requirement on health centers. So far, only six Texas health centers have responded. As it only takes about 15 minutes to complete, please take a look at the survey and provide your feedback if you haven't done so already. [View the survey.](#) The information from this survey will follow up on GWU's spring 2007 report that indicated the citizenship documentation requirement has had a disruptive effect on health center Medicaid patients and health center revenues. Questions about the survey can be directed to Peter Shin, PhD at 202-530-2313 or [pshin@gwu.edu](mailto:pshin@gwu.edu).

### **Medicaid Reform Update**

As a quick follow up to our Special Edition Update that went out earlier this month, TACHC is working now on finalizing comments on the Medicaid reform concept paper. Comments are due to HHSC on December 28. TACHC staff has also joined a workgroup with other consumer and provider advocates to share information, combine forces, and emphasize important themes in our comments on the state's reform plan. The state has already submitted this concept paper to CMS and expecting public comments simultaneously. At the Medicaid Reform Legislative Oversight Committee hearing on December 6, committee members emphasized the need to proceed quickly, but with caution, with the waiver application process. Advocates continue to have concerns with the proposal and are working to submit comments to the state by December 28. Click to read the [concept paper](#) and stay tuned....

### **Galveston Editorial Praises Health Centers as the "Bright Spot" in the Health System**

Dr. Howard Brody, a family physician and director of the UTMB Institute for Medical Humanities, wrote an editorial in the Galveston Daily News this month praising community health centers as "the bright spot in an imploding health system." He notes how health centers provide health care to many people who would not receive it otherwise, do so cost effectively, and that health centers "practically invented the 'medical home.'" Hear hear! Check out the [editorial](#).

### **Registry Link for New Advocates**

Please ask your friends and colleagues to click the link above and join the community health center grassroots advocacy network.

**Have a Safe and Happy Holiday Season!!**