

Texas Update - March 2008

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Eligibility System Problems and their FQHC Impact

The state eligibility system, which has been in crisis since January of 2006 when the state first piloted the Integrated Eligibility and Enrollment system, is still having problems meeting federal timeliness standards for application processing. Clients continue to deal with administrative delays and must wait too long for their benefits to be approved. Many advocates and other state offices, such as the State Auditor, are concerned that the TIERS computer system, on which the new eligibility system is based, is not functioning at a level that can support the magnitude of the eligibility and enrollment workload. HHSC maintains that the problems with the system are not the result of the TIERS system but are related to manpower - having enough staff who have been trained in both TIERS and relevant eligibility policy to work cases in a timely manner. HHSC has posted vacant positions across the state and has hired 800 new eligibility staff people since the beginning of FY 2008. During the same period, however, 676 staff left employment with the agency.

The problem of sufficient training in the TIERS system affects current and new staff alike. Unless they are operating in the initial rollout counties of Travis and Hays, outstationed eligibility workers (OEWs), including those at FQHCs, have not yet been trained on this new system. This lack of training for FQHC OEWs is particularly frustrating in light of HHSC's policy to switch all cases into the TIERS system if one person from a family is entered into TIERS, as we reported in last month's Update. Additionally, the excess workload for the eligibility system is having an impact on FQHC workers directly. The state has been sending "outside" work into the FQHC workers, including those that are paid for by the center, for processing.

TACHC has a meeting scheduled with HHSC eligibility staff to address these issues and the new contract HHSC has asked centers who host an OEW to sign. If you haven't already, please be sure to alert [Sherry Travis](#) at TACHC to any and all issues you may be experiencing with your OEW or with obtaining an OEW for your center so we can be well prepared to advocate on your behalf with the state.

Medicaid Reform Update

As we reported in last month's Update, HHSC continues to develop its benefit package for Health Opportunity Pool beneficiaries under their Medicaid reform proposal. Along with the benefit design, Medicaid reform staff are working to design a cost sharing strategy to ensure beneficiaries take part in the cost of their care. Currently, the state

structures its cost sharing in two tiers - below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and above 150%. Eligibility for the program is capped at 200% FPL. After advocates raised concern about the equity of this policy for the poorest beneficiaries, HHSC asked TACHC to provide some examples of sliding fee scale policies that are working in our centers. Thanks to those of you who have provided those examples.

TACHC is currently working to schedule a meeting in early April with Medicaid reform staff to discuss not only the cost sharing strategies but FQHC reimbursement under the Medicaid reform proposal. HHSC has asked questions about whether FQHCs can be counted on as a resource for HOP beneficiaries whose benefits have been exhausted. TACHC has made clear that any discussion of this cannot go forward without first discussing our reimbursement. We'll keep you updated on the outcome of this meeting.

StarDent Implementation is Approaching - Be Sure to Sign Up as a Provider

For those centers that provide dental care, don't forget that to get reimbursement for providing care to foster children in your dental clinic, you'll need to sign your center up with the Superior subcontractor, StarDent. TACHC approved a uniform contract for Texas FQHCs with StarDent. A representative from StarDent has contacted each of your centers by now at least once. Providers are to begin offering services under the new managed care program for foster children in Texas in April. Please call Cecile Carson at TACHC if you have any questions and for copies of the uniform contract.

The SUNRx Program is Getting Underway

As you are aware, TACHC offers a pharmacy group purchasing program that offers very competitive pricing on pharmaceuticals. TACHC is in the processing of launching a new pharmacy benefits administrative service program service available through the TACHC 340Better pharmacy program, in conjunction with SUNRx, that can be used in health centers with no pharmacy but who want to start a pharmacy service, centers with in-house pharmacies and/or centers that contract with retail pharmacies. The service is currently in a Beta test phase before being launched to the national level; however, you can still learn more about the service and how it works and the opportunities it can offer your health center. If you want to learn more about how the SUNRx service can save money for the health center pharmacy program and at the same time assist with compliance of the 340B regulations, please contact Lynn Ford, the TACHC Purchasing Program Coordinator at 512.329.5959 or via email at lford@tachc.org.

PCCM+PLUS Program

Effective May 1, 2008, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Texas Medicaid & Healthcare Partnership (TMHP) will launch the [Primary Care Case Management \(PCCM\)+PLUS](#) program to provide additional care coordination services for clients who are aged, blind, or disabled clients who are not dual-eligible and who reside in PCCM counties. The PCCM+PLUS program is designed to help hospitals, physicians, large provider practices, and Federal Qualified Health Centers coordinate care for these high-risk clients. The services will include discharge planning and care management support, including case management and coordination with Community Health Services (CHS) staff. There is nothing your health center needs to do to enroll -

the program will reach out to you. Stay tuned for more information on this from TMHP and HHSC.

Encourage Others to Join Us as Health Center Advocates!

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