

Report to the Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee

Medicaid Client Education

Prepared by the Division of Medicaid and Health Financing

September 2009



Background

The 2009 Legislature passed Senate Bill 2 and included the following intent language:

“The Legislature intends that the Department of Health report to the Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee detailing efforts and proposals to help Medicaid clients understand the cost of medical care and improving health literacy. The Department of Health shall report to the Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee by October 1, 2009.”

Current Efforts

The Utah Medicaid program operates a managed care program under 1915(b) Freedom of Choice waiver authority. The waiver has been in continuous operation since 1982. The waiver requires that Medicaid clients be offered the choice between at least two health plans and must be given unbiased information on which to make that choice. Health Program Representatives (HPRs) educate clients on the choices available and assist the client with enrolling in a health plan. Those individuals that do not make a choice are assigned to a health plan. The HPRs also educate clients on how to access care and use their Medicaid benefits in a responsible manner. The Legislative intent language added new focus to the HPR client education activities.

Staff from the bureaus of Medicaid Operations, Medicaid Eligibility Policy and Managed Health Care within the Division of Medicaid and Health Financing met to review the intent language and develop action steps.

Intent language excerpt: Help Medicaid clients understand the cost of medical care

Action item: Analyze the comparative cost of an emergency department visit vs. a visit to an urgent care or primary care provider. Develop client education materials to deliver the message in a cost effective manner.

- Include cost of care information in Utah Medicaid Member Guide
- Include cost of care information in Welcome letters
- Include cost of care information in quarterly Clientell newsletter
- Include cost of care information in Emergency Department diversion materials
- Send a letter to all Medicaid households that places focus on the cost savings to Medicaid when clients choose to see their doctor rather than go to an emergency room for routine care.

Intent language excerpt: Improve health literacy

Health literacy is defined as “an individual’s ability to read, understand and act on health information.”

Action item: Analyze the Medicaid education materials currently used and improve readability.

Tool: Flesh-Kincaid grade level readability. Determine appropriate topics and develop cost effective methods to deliver the education materials.

- Include health tips and “did you know” articles in quarterly Clientell newsletter
- Send letter to all Medicaid households and include information that will improve understanding about when to use an urgent care or after-hours clinic rather than the emergency department.
- Update the Utah Medical Benefits website to include links to health education sites such as WebMD – this item is still in development.
- Update the Medicaid Member Guide to reflect Flesh-Kincaid readability standards – in process.

Examples of client education materials



Member Guide Oct
09.doc

Exhibit 1 - Utah Medicaid Member Guide

The following language will be included in the next printing of the guide

It saves a lot of money when you use an after-hours clinic (urgent care) instead of going to an emergency room. One emergency room visit cost Medicaid the same as 12 after-hours visits. Make sure it is really an emergency before going to an emergency room. Be smart about the way you use your Medicaid card. You can find more information on line at www.health.utah.gov/safetowait.



MMCS Welcome
Letter with Urgent-Er

Exhibit 2 - Welcome Letters

The following language was added to the computer generated Welcome Letters sent to new Medicaid enrollees.

- Helps you understand the difference between the cost of urgent care and an emergency room visit.

Exhibit 3 - Letter to all Medicaid clients

A letter emphasizing the need to use services appropriately and in a cost effective manner is scheduled to be sent with all Medicaid cards in the near future.



Proposed ER UC
Letter_Edited.dot

Exhibits 4 and 5 - Clientell

The Clientell is a quarterly newsletter that is sent with Medicaid cards. In response to the legislative intent language health literacy topics are now included. The March issue informed clients about the services of Health Program Representatives (HPRs) that are available to provide orientation classes about medical benefits. The June issue informed clients about the Safe to Wait (Emergency Room diversion) website and about the impact of oral health on general health and about the link between periodontal disease and preterm births.

Future issues will continue to include health education topics.



Clientell March
2009.pdf



Clientell June
2009.pdf

Utah Poison Control Center Information

The Director of the Utah Poison Control Center met with the Executive Director of the Utah Department of Health and the Medicaid Director to provide information about the cost saving services the Utah Poison Control Center provides. As a result of that meeting client education materials are in the process of being reviewed and updated to include information about how to reach the Utah Poison Control center. Client education material will emphasize the importance of making contact with the Utah Poison Control Center in an emergency as precious time and resources can both be saved in many situations.

Exhibit 6 - Emergency Room Diversion Grant

The Division of Medicaid and Health Financing received a grant award that funds efforts to reduce non-emergent use of emergency services. The grant focuses on changing Medicaid client behavior and reducing inappropriate utilization of services. Funding runs through April 14, 2010. In response to the legislative intent language comparative cost information was included in member materials. A "Safe to Wait" website was developed and is featured on the Utah Department of Health homepage. <http://health.utah.gov/safetowait/>

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Is it Safe to Wait?

1-877-662-9651
www.Poorn.usps.gov/safetowait


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Is it Safe To Wait?

Do you use the Emergency Room wisely?

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HOME

EMERGENCY ROOM

URGENT CARE

PRIMARY CARE

QUESTIONNAIRE

COMMUNITY CLINICS

<http://health.utah.gov/safetowait/> (1 of 2) [9/2/2009 12:56:54 PM]

Emergency rooms are expensive and may not provide appropriate care for your health issue. **Ask yourself - Is it safe to wait...**

- ...to call my doctor?
- ...for a few hours?
- ...for a day or so?

If so, you have choices!