

STATES TRY NEW MEDICAID PROGRAMS

By Gerry Cherry
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■(GIT) Fourteen states, including Oklahoma, have been approved by the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct experimental comprehensive health care reform demonstration projects for Medicaid clients. These experiments are testing new and innovative ideas relating to benefits and services, eligibility requirements and processes, program payment and service delivery. The aim of the pilot programs is to serve more low-income and uninsured people, while saving money through more efficient delivery systems.

Section 1115 of the Social Security Act provides the Secretary of Health and Human Services broad discretion to waive certain laws pertaining to Medicaid, in order to conduct experimental, pilot or demonstration projects. Since January 1993, HHS has approved 14 demonstration projects, and the framework of one additional demonstration. In addition, 19 states have received Medicaid waivers since January 1993, as part of larger welfare reform projects. These complementary Medicaid waivers enable states to continue providing essential health care services while encouraging independence from welfare.

Oklahoma's project is called SoonerCare. Managers of the project, the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, under the direction of Dr. Garth Splinter, hope the project will increase access to primary care for benefi-

ciaries through a managed care program in urban and rural areas. To guarantee the development of managed care in rural areas, key incentives will be provided to urban plans who undertake linkage efforts with rural providers. A Managed Care Task Force, with Sen. Stratton Taylor as chairman, is following the program in an oversight capacity. This program was implemented on July 1, 1996, and increases in rates to Medicaid recipients are part of the experiment. HCFA will monitor implementation of this and other programs throughout the 5-year life of the demonstration projects.

A plan to increase federal participation for Medicaid and foster care funding was presented to agency heads who were members of the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, last month, which cited pilot programs in Oregon, Illinois and Florida as possible models for some funding practices. Basic outlines of their programs are listed below.

FLORIDA: The Florida Health Security Program is a voluntary, employer-based, discounted premium program designed to provide access to private health insurance for employed but uninsured Floridians. The program will use a managed competition model and will provide health insurance for 1.1 million uninsured Floridians with incomes at or below 250 percent of the FPL. The state is working on required state legislation. HCFA granted Florida an exemption from the 75/25 enrollment composition require-

ment for a 1-year period beginning July 1, 1996, for health plans achieving a rating of over 90 percent in the state's annual review.

OREGON: The Oregon Health Plan expands Medicaid eligibility and shifts delivery of Medicaid services into fully and partially capitated plans and primary care case management programs. The state utilized a public prioritization process to establish the service package provided under the Medicaid demonstration. The demonstration extends Medicaid coverage to individuals with incomes up to 100 percent of the FPL, expanding coverage to over 120,000 additional low-income Oregonians. This program was implemented on February 1, 1994 and HCFA is monitoring implementation of the program.

ILLINOIS: MediPlan Plus will increase access and quality of health care for the state's 1.1 million Medicaid beneficiaries through increased use of managed care. Managed care will be provided through a mix of health maintenance organizations, provider-run managed care community networks (MCCNs), pre-paid health plans (for a limited period), and enrolled managed care providers who agree to provide case management services. These providers will include Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) and physicians. MediPlan Plus will be implemented statewide. Illinois anticipates that it will take a minimum of 13 months to implement the program.

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to mirror your children's feelings by repeating them.

- Help clarify and relate experiences. As you listen, try to make your child's feelings clear by stating them in your own words.

Why are Parents Important in Building Children's Communications Skills?

Parents play an essential role in building children's communication skills because children spend more time with their parents than any other adult. Children also have a deeper involvement with their parents than with any other adult, and the family as a unit has lifelong contact with its members. Parents control many of the contacts a child has with society as well as society's contacts with the child.

The greatest audience children can have is an adult who is important to them and interested in them.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

From U.S. Dept. of Commerce

■(WASHINGTON) This report presents initial lessons learned from the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP) projects funded in 1994 and 1995. The report looks at the community impacts of TIIAP projects, and presents examples of how specific projects are using advanced telecommunications and information technologies to provide better services, strengthen community ties, and provide increased access to information for thousands of Americans.

Lessons learned to date include insights into project planning, selecting the appropriate technologies, developing and maintaining productive community partnerships, and securing long-term financial support.

Material for the report was gathered from a workshop and focus group sessions conducted with TIIAP project directors in June 1996, and a review of TIIAP project reports and documents. The report is intended for community-based organizations and government agencies wishing to incorporate new information technologies into services they provide the community, as well as those who seek to better understand the TIIAP program.

The TIIAP program is administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). It is a competitive, merit-based grant program providing seed money for innovative, information infrastructure projects by state and local governments, schools and school districts, non-profit health care and

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