

# ***Medicaid Matters***

## **Agency awarded \$7.6 million grant to transform Medicaid program, “Together for Quality” designed to improve health outcomes**

Governor Bob Riley announced Jan. 25 that Alabama is receiving a \$7.6 million federal grant to support the Alabama Medicaid Agency’s efforts to transform the state’s fragmented claims and process-oriented system into one that is coordinated, patient-centered and cost-efficient. The \$7.6 million federal “transformation” grant is the third-highest being awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to improve the efficiency, economy and quality of care of state Medicaid agencies.

“Early in my administration, we set out on a mission to reform the way health and human services are provided in this state,” Governor Riley said. “Our innovative plan not only seeks to increase efficiency and reduce duplication, but rightfully keeps the health and well-being of the patient at the forefront.”



Alabama’s transformation grant proposal, “Together for Quality,” was selected in a highly competitive process from approximately 130 proposals submitted by more than 40 states. The two-year grant will be used to create a statewide electronic health information system that links Medicaid, state health agencies, providers and private payers while establishing a comprehensive, quality improvement model for the Alabama Medicaid program.

“Alabama is well-positioned to transform the state Medicaid program by offering physicians, pharmacists and other health care providers the information they need to improve coordination of care, prevent complications from fragmented health care services and information, reduce patient error rates through electronic health records and medication risk management and increase utilization of generic drugs,” he said.

The project will be coordinated by the Alabama Medicaid Agency in cooperation with the Department of Public Health and an advisory council including health care providers, health care professional associations, state agencies, the Task Force to Strengthen Alabama Families, private health plans, health care purchasers, health information technology entities, business, academia, patient groups, and quality improvement organizations.

For more information on the grant, [click here](#).

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## ***Medicaid Commissioner Steckel sworn in by Governor Bob Riley***

Medicaid Commissioner Carol Steckel was one of 26 state officials sworn in January 17 by Governor Bob Riley to serve as a member of the governor’s second term Cabinet. Commissioner Steckel also joined other Cabinet members in signing an ethics pledge. Appointed to her current position by

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- ◆ Medicaid documents updated to reflect 2007 Federal Poverty Levels
- ◆ Agency CFO named to national leadership position

## **Commissioner Carol Steckel reappointed by Governor Bob Riley**

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Governor Riley in December 2003, she previously served as Medicaid Commissioner between November 1988 and July 1992.

Commissioner Steckel currently serves on the Executive Committee of the National Association of State Medicaid Directors and is involved in numerous community activities, including memberships on the Dean's Advisory Committee, UAB School of Public Health; Board of Counselors, UAB Center for Aging and the Norton Board of Advisors for Birmingham-Southern College.

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## ***Medicaid eligibility documents updated to reflect 2007 FPL***

Medicaid eligibility documents have been updated to reflect the new federal poverty levels published in the Federal Register on January 24, 2007, and are now available on the Agency's website under "Apply for Medicaid." New eligibility levels will be effective on February 1, 2007.

Publication of the FPL makes it possible for state programs and the Social Security Administration to align their FPL-related income eligibility standards with increases in other benefits, such as Social Security retirement and disability, which are increased effective January 1 of each year. This should also assist States and SSA with their determinations of Medicare Part D Low-Income Subsidy since eligibility for this extra help is also based on the federal poverty levels.

To view Alabama Medicaid eligibility documents, [click here](#). To view the FPLs on the HHS website, [click here](#).

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## ***Agency CFO named to national leadership position***

Terry G. Bryant, Deputy Commissioner of Financial Management for the Alabama Medicaid Agency, was elected Regional Director at Large for the National Association of State Human Services Finance Officers. He began his one-year term in December 2006.

The HSFO has been active since 1948 and is a nonprofit organization of state human services finance officers whose members serve on federal government technical advisory groups to formulate policies and regulations affecting human service programs and grants. Members of this organization evaluate the impact of new and revised policies and regulations on their state programs as well as disseminate information through their human service agencies.

A 1981 graduate of Huntingdon College, Bryant has held numerous leadership positions during his 20-year tenure with the Alabama Medicaid Agency including associate director of hospital audit, associate director of agency audit, associate director of reimbursement and rate analysis, deputy director of facility based care and director of finance. He was named Medicaid's chief financial officer and Deputy Commissioner of Financial Management in January 2006.

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