

Medicaid Matters

Recession adds nearly 100,000 eligibles to Alabama Medicaid rolls

Pregnant women and children in Alabama are qualifying for Medicaid coverage at an increasing rate, a sign of difficult economic times and loss of job-related private health insurance benefits in the state. In the 22 months since the recession began, Alabama Medicaid enrollment has increased by



almost 100,000 people from 734,810 in December 2007 to 834,747 in October 2009. In the first year of the recession, an average of 4,000 people became eligible for Medicaid services each month. However, Alabama has averaged 4,800 new Medicaid eligibles each month since December 2008. [Link to data](#)

Most of the increase can be attributed to growth in Medicaid's SOBRA program for children, teens and pregnant women which grew by nearly 57,000 since December 2007.

Individuals qualifying for SOBRA have incomes at or slightly above the poverty line, or about \$29,328 annually for a family of four. Medicaid for Low Income Families (MLIF), a program for families with children at home and extremely low incomes, grew by more than 12,600. At the same time, Medicaid's Plan First program, which provides family planning and birth control services to women who – if pregnant – would qualify for Medicaid has also shown tremendous growth with 16,800 additional recipients qualifying for services during the 22-month period. [Link to Qualifying for Medicaid web page](#) [Read more >>](#)

Revamped maternity program designed to improve birth outcomes

Healthier pregnancies for more than 30,000 Alabama mothers each year and a better start in life for their infants are at the core of a new, redesigned Medicaid maternity care program set to begin January 1, 2010. The program will be implemented statewide by [primary contractors](#) selected during a competitive bid process earlier in the year.

The new [Medicaid maternity program](#) is the culmination of a cooperative, year-long endeavor to revamp the program to improve birth outcomes while remaining cost effective, according to Alabama Medicaid Commissioner Carol H. Steckel.

"A dedicated, focused and time-consuming effort has turned Medicaid's vision into a reality with a viable maternity care program that will increase the number of healthier mothers and babies," she said. [Read more >>](#)



- ◆ **Medicaid opens second customer service center in Montgomery**
- ◆ **Agency uses new technology to assess program effectiveness**

Medicaid opens second customer service center in Montgomery

In an ongoing effort to reduce costs and increase efficiency through innovation and technology, the Alabama Medicaid Agency will begin operations at its second customer service center in downtown Montgomery effective Dec. 1.

“The centers are part of the Beneficiary Services Division’s contribution to Medicaid’s transformation effort to provide better care—or service—at a lower cost,” said Lee Rawlinson, deputy commissioner for Beneficiary Services.

Located at 500 Monroe Street on the second floor of the Agency’s central office, the wheelchair-accessible center is where clients can apply for both SOBRA and Medicaid Savings programs in one location with seven Medicaid Eligibility Specialists available from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday to assist clients. It also doubles as the Montgomery district office for elderly and disabled clients. [Read more >>](#)



Agency uses new technology to better assess program effectiveness



Dr. Mary McIntyre (left) and Stephanie Lindsay of Statistical Support, worked closely with AHRQ on the development of the ROI calculator.

Each year, the Alabama Medicaid Agency measures the accuracy and timeliness of claims payments and checks to make sure recipients are properly qualified to receive services. However, it is difficult to measure if improved patient care results in savings for the agency.

Now, Alabama Medicaid’s participation in a national quality improvement project is providing a new tool for the Agency to more precisely evaluate the value of care provided to recipients with chronic illnesses like asthma and diabetes, according to Dr. Mary G. McIntyre, Medical Director of the Agency’s Office of Clinical Standards and Quality.

The new tool, called the Return on Investment (ROI) calculator, came to Dr. McIntyre’s attention during an Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) conference in 2008. A federal agency, AHRQ supports research designed to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans. Developed by AHRQ, the new technology offered a means to objectively assess the effectiveness of a care management program for chronically ill patients. [Read more >>](#)

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