

Center for Medicaid, CHIP and Survey & Certification

CMCS Informational Bulletin

DATE: May 21, 2010

FROM: Cindy Mann, Director
Center for Medicaid, CHIP and Survey & Certification (CMCS)

SUBJECT: Health Insurance Portal

I am writing to update you on our progress on building the new health insurance Website, and about the state program information to populate the site that we will be sharing with you in the coming weeks.

Section 1103(a) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (the Affordable Care Act) as amended by section 10102(b) of the same Act, requires the establishment of an internet Website (portal) through which individuals and small businesses can obtain information about the insurance coverage options that may be available to them in their State. As you know, these options include Medicaid and CHIP. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued an interim final rule effective May 10, 2010, in order to implement this new HHS responsibility (RIN 0991-AB63, Health Care Reform Insurance Web Portal Requirements, available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ociio/regulations/webportal.html>).

As the interim final rule indicates, there are no new State reporting requirements to support implementation of the Medicaid and CHIP sections of the portal. The data for the Web portal will come from existing Federal sources — the official documentation of State programs in the State Medicaid and CHIP plans, and approved waiver and demonstration documents. The Web portal will also be designed to offer links to your State Medicaid and CHIP agencies' Websites for more specific information. Please see the regulation at the link above for additional background and discussion about the portal.

Because of the extremely accelerated timeline for this project, the Web portal will be implemented in phases. The initial offering in July will describe in broad terms the Medicaid and CHIP services that may be available in each State to broad groups of consumers. This information will become more refined and specific over time. CMS is responsible for providing Medicaid and CHIP program data to the portal. To do so, CMS is producing comprehensive uniform summary data for each State, in a format which will populate the website as information is needed in each phase of development.

We intend to provide you with our summaries of your State service systems as soon as we produce them in late May. You are not required to verify the summaries, but we encourage you to do so, since this new Web portal will include information about your State programs. We would appreciate your comments no later than June 4, 2010. Thanks in advance for your help in reviewing these summaries.

We will provide additional guidance about the portal and the suggested review process when we provide subsequent transmittals to each State. However, some general issues which may be helpful to consider as you review the summary information in those transmittals include:

- State-specific Medicaid and CHIP information will be part of the larger health care and insurance coverage portal.
- The information summaries will cover all State Medicaid and CHIP programs. Portal content will be derived from a subset of the data, with the level of detail increasing as the portal matures.
- While States and a number of national organizations offer Websites about Medicaid services, the portal will be a Federal resource, this site will reflect our official information — the services and program information in your approved State plans, waiver applications, and other approved documents.
- If you find that an entry in the summary does not accurately reflect approved documents, we will investigate any discrepancies, and correct the data. To the extent that the summary data points out discrepancies between approved documents and programs and services as currently offered by your State, we hope you will point this out to us. We will work with each State individually to determine appropriate next steps.
- The summary data we will provide will not be a preview of the portal. The summary information will describe States' Medicaid, CHIP, and demonstration programs, and will be more detailed than the information found on the portal. We believe that it is important to capture and share all of the program information in a consistent manner at the outset, rather than in response to the development of each phase of the portal development.

Because we expect to be sharing this information shortly and will have a short time frame for review, we ask that you designate a single State contact person for our future communications on this subject, and email that contact information to Sona.Stepp@cms.hhs.gov. If you have questions about this memorandum, please email Ruth.Hughes@cms.hhs.gov.

One of the significant challenges of this undertaking is to present complex coverage and eligibility information in a way that is both useful to the public and accurate, in each phase of portal development. This will doubtless require several iterations and we welcome your suggestions and appreciate your patience as HHS builds this portal.

We look forward to working with you to implement this unprecedented national information resource.