



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
Office of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
Office of Children, Youth & Families
P.O. BOX 2675
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17105-2675

August 28, 2009

This Notice is being sent to:

Mental Health Treatment Agencies
Drug and Alcohol Treatment Agencies
Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations
County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Program Administrators
Single County Authority Directors
County Children and Youth Administrators
Chief Juvenile Probation Offices
Private children and Youth Administrators

As you may be aware, effective August 1, 2009, the Department of Public Welfare implemented changes to the HealthChoices Behavioral Health Program that impact Medical Assistance coverage for certain Children in Substitute Care (CISC). In order to review the service authorization processes to follow and to answer questions that you may have, the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and Office of Children, Youth and Families are hosting a video-conference on September 15, 2009, from 1-4 pm.

Prior to August 1st, CISC who were placed outside of their HealthChoices Zone remained in, or reverted to, Medical Assistance Fee-For-Service reimbursement for their behavioral and physical health services. Services such as psychiatric inpatient or drug and alcohol outpatient treatment were billed for MA eligible children directly through PROMISE. Services such as Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services or Residential Treatment Facilities (RTFs) required prior authorization through the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Division of Medical Review. Room and Board charges for non-accredited RTFs were funded through the County Needs Based Plan and Budget, and in some cases, through the BH-MCOs. Upon return from placement outside of their HealthChoices Zone, MA eligibility reverted back to, or became established with, the HealthChoices Program in the county with custody or court supervision. This change in eligibility contributed to a lack of continuity in care for children and youth.

The Department attempted to resolve this disruption in care for some time but was not able to collect the data necessary to support a HealthChoices rate adjustment until recently. Effective August 1st, behavioral health service coverage for CISC placed out of their HealthChoices Zone became the contractual obligation of the BH-MCOs. The Offices of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and Children, Youth and

Families provided notice of the changes through a variety of communication strategies (please see attached). We understand, however, that not all parties impacted by the changes were fully informed of the procedures to be followed in order to request service authorization and payment for CISC. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

The video conference broadcast will originate from the Clothes Tree Conferencing Center on the grounds of the DGS Annex in Harrisburg. The purpose of the session is to:

Review the HealthChoices Behavioral Health Contract Changes

How the changes impact Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol provider agencies

How the changes impact the Juvenile Justice System

How the changes impact Child Welfare agencies

How the changes impact Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations.

Attached please find a listing of video conferencing locations reserved for this event. In order to insure adequate capacity for participation, PLEASE REGISTER WITH ONE OF THE DESIGNATED LOCATIONS IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND.

We are certain that the video conference will address the questions that you have about authorization and payment for behavioral health services for CISC. In order to be responsive, we welcome your questions in advance. You may submit questions to the following e-mail address by no later than September 9th: ra-outofzone@state.pa.us. If you are not able to attend, there will be representatives attending from various stakeholder organization and they will be asked to provide ongoing information and technical assistance. In addition, OMHSAS and OCYF will compile frequently asked questions and distribute them to Child Welfare, Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol county programs and provider agencies, as well as will post them on the DPW website.

We appreciate the significance of these changes. It is critical that the changes do not result in a negative impact on services to children and youth who need behavioral health support. Please take advantage of this opportunity to address questions or concerns that you may have.

Sincerely,



Richard Gold
Deputy Secretary for Children,
Youth and Families



Joan L. Erney, J.D.
Deputy Secretary for Mental
Health & Substance
Abuse Services