



Notes from June 22 “Make Medicaid Event Better” Meeting

DHS representatives attending

Ruth Brown, Asst Director for County Operations
Jason Pederson, Deputy Chief of Community Engagement

Medicaid Community Members in attendance

Valencia White
Brittany Nichols
Jacqueline Webster
Joyce Means
Crystal Alexander

ACO Staff in attendance

Loriee Evans
Dawn Spears
Demetrius Melvin
Donnie Ringo
Neil Sealy

“When you’re a single parent, it’s really critical and helpful to get this support for our families.”
Crystal Alexander.

Here are some of the issues our Medicaid community members brought up with Ms. Brown, some of her responses, and follow-up questions we can plan on sending her, upon review and approval of Medicaid community members.

Community member issue: letters threatening termination mailed in error

A family is receiving multiple scary notices that a father’s healthcare coverage will be terminated, despite the fact that he’s disabled and in a nursing home, per Brittany

- Ms. Brown attempted to reassure Brittany that these letters were a “glitch” in the system.

Follow-up needed with DHS:

- What is being done to make sure that eligible clients who are receiving these letters won’t also be inadvertently dropped, or their case “closed,” as a result of a similar glitch?

- What can be done to communicate with clients receiving these letters to provide verifiable reassurance that they will not continue to be negatively impacted by glitches?

Community member issue: improving communications

Receiving notifications just from mail is not working for many of us—we are not receiving notifications of requirements to provide documentation in a timely manner to meet deadlines, and we are therefore at risk of our cases being closed, per Brittany

- Ms. Brown suggested people opt-in to emails, when they apply – but she did not know how/if people can opt in once they are in the program. She mentioned it's been suggested that they explore an app which people can use to check status, and update their account, supply documentation. She referred people to the website as well, but it was unclear how many clients actually know about the website and how to use it, in addition to a very large portion of clients not being comfortable with, or having access to technology.

Follow-up needed with DHS:

- Clarify with all applying clients and current clients (at the application process, enrollment process, and during the receiving services period) how they may opt in to receiving EMAILS and TEXTS for notifications. In particular, for clients who enrolled years ago without an opt-in option, how may they sign up for emails and texts now?
- Clarify with clients: when do you use the DHS website, versus when do you navigate the Access Arkansas website?
- Can communications be more tailored to the needs of individual client's communications habits – these days “postal mail for everyone” has too many hiccups and breaks down when people move, which is often
- Can the website and its applications and uses be promoted more clearly to clients, e.g. can you opt-in to text and emails on the website?
 - Note from Brittany, who researched some of these options, per Ms. Brown's suggestions following the June 21 meeting: “I just spent some time on DHS and Access Arkansas websites and I see no way to update your contact information with DHS online - you have to call in to a county office. Also, if you set up your account in-person, I don't find a way to connect your account to an online account. It seems you can create an account for application, but not access online tools if you have an account already standing/open. This is especially confusing for me since I'm doing this as a representative payee/medical power of attorney – the app/account is not for me, so I don't want to confuse the system and make duplicate applications!”
- Can clients use the PHE hotline to opt-in to texts and emails.
- Can we have an app to be able to check on benefits and to update account – if DMV has an easy online app, then why not DHS? :)

Community member issue: accessibility and availability of DHS staff to clients needing help, per Dawn and Crystal. It can be hard for clients who work during the day to get to the DHS office during open hours to get the assistance they need, or even to simply turn in documents and receive verification.

- Ms. Brown suggested people use their lunch break, or encourage family members to get involved to help. That is a solution for some people – but not everyone. She was receptive to the online chat option, and said they were looking into it, per our March report suggestion.

Follow up needed:

- Can we add a chat option to the AccessArkansas website, for immediate real-time assistance online?
- Can we expand office hours time, such that DHS staff could be available in the evening hours or weekends, for phone assistance, if not for in-person assistance too?

Community member issue: Southwest Pulaski County office is a difficult environment

There are a lot of frustrated clients, who have to take a number and stand in long lines, even if you're just dropping off paperwork. People may not be comfortable dropping papers into a dropbox, because they would prefer a verification stamp, in case of lost paperwork. Clients feel they are not treated with dignity and respect, per Valencia and Crystal.

- Ms. Brown suggested people take pictures of their check stubs, and email them to your DHS contact using the email address formula: firstname.lastname@dhs.arkansas.gov

Follow-up needed:

- What can be done to add to staffing as well as staff training so that a) current staff don't feel overwhelmed, and b) a culture of respect and "we're here to help our community members" is prioritized