

2007 Fact Sheet:

Pierce County mental health services

THE BACKGROUND

Since 1992, the Pierce County Regional Support Network (RSN) has managed mental health services in the county through Community Mental Health Agencies for people on Medical coupons and others who need mental health care. This year, however, Pierce County notified DSHS it would no longer contract as an RSN, leaving the state to assume responsibility for delivery of these services in Pierce County. As a result, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has been engaged this fall in setting up a replacement delivery system that will be able to provide mental health services in Pierce County as of January 1, 2008, when Pierce's RSN contract expires. The major change for providers in the county will be that the new payment system will be fee-for-service. In the past, providers received a pre-set reimbursement for each patient they agreed to serve. In the future, providers will bill the state for the services they provide, and the state will reimburse them with standardized rates of payments.

CONSUMERS WILL CONTINUE TO RECEIVE SERVICES

Pierce County Medicaid clients who have been receiving mental health services through the Pierce County RSN will continue to receive services through the same providers as before. The same is true of other low-income residents who could not qualify for Medicaid but who have been receiving state-only funded services because they met "Standards of Care" -- in other words, they had a legitimate need for mental health services and could not afford them on their own. During this period of transition, DSHS has encouraged current mental health clients to take questions or concerns to their providers. They also may call the DSHS Mental Health Division in Olympia at 1-800-446-0259 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. For crisis services, Pierce County residents should call 9-1-1 or the Crisis Center at 253-790-4333 (24-hour) or 1-800-576-7764.

WHAT THE NEW SYSTEM WILL LOOK LIKE:

DSHS is negotiating three key contracts that will replace the RSN with a fee-for-service system. In all, the state expects to spend more than \$50 million in Pierce County in 2008 on mental health services, including:

- Pierce County, which acted as both a provider and an RSN, will continue to operate its crisis mental health triage, a mobile crisis response system, and an Evaluation and Treatment (E&T) program that will assess patients' needs and prescribe treatment. The annual cost of these services, still in negotiations, is estimated to reach above \$9 million.
- A new vendor will serve as the state's billing agent in Pierce County. The vendor will process providers' claims and issue reimbursements based on the new rates. Another new vendor will provide utilization management oversight, making sure that the services provided are appropriate and meet established standards.
- The total state-only cost for the full 18 months is \$6.6 million. This includes the state-only costs for fee-for-service claims handling for non-Medicaid consumers.

COST IMPACTS OF THE TRANSITION:

Pierce County's decision to abandon the RSN system was based on its assessment that state-only funds did not cover the cost of providing services. The state must live within the appropriation provided by the Legislature. But the state also is forced by circumstances to protect the interests of the Pierce County residents who depend on state- and federal-funded mental health services. If necessary, Washington's legislators may need to provide further policy direction for the future.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

How will Pierce County residents access Crisis Mental Health services after January 1, 2008?

- In a life-threatening emergency, residents should call 9-1-1 or go to your local emergency room. Crisis Mental Health Services can be reached by calling 253-790-4333 (24 hour) or 1-800-576-7764. (The TDD number is 253-798-4349).
- Consumers currently receiving mental health services will continue to receive them through the same mental health agency.
- New consumers should call the mental health agencies in the provider network directory, which is available by calling the Mental Health Division (1-800-446-0259) or the crisis line at 1-800-576-7764.

What will change for Medicaid recipients and their families?

There should be minimal change, if any. All of the same Mental Health providers are still available to provide services, and clubhouse services at Rose House will continue to be available. Respite and Supported Employment may be limited by the resources available at local mental health agencies, but all other previously provided Medicaid services will remain available. Medicaid clients also will have the flexibility to go to any licensed and contracting Community Mental Health Agency (CMHA) for services.

Will this change other Medicaid benefits?

No. Other Medicaid benefits are not affected by these changes.

Will Pierce County be involved in mental health services after January 1, 2008?

Yes, Pierce County is expected to sign a new contract with the state and will continue to provide the following:

- 30-bed inpatient evaluation and treatment facility
- 18-bed crisis stabilization and triage
- 16-bed secure detox facility, funded by DASA
- Mobile Outreach Crisis Team, including Designated Crisis Responders (DCRs)
- Ombuds Services and Care Managers
- Involuntary Commitment Services

What impact does MHD expect on local mental health agencies?

- Mental health agencies will be paid differently in the future. Instead of a monthly flat rate, they will file claims with DSHS for services they render.
- All of the current mental health agencies will contract with MHD to provide their current services. In the future there may be other agencies who qualify to contract to provide Medicaid services.
- Some providers have expressed concern they will receive less in overall payments, but DSHS research shows that is not likely. Providers who take the time to learn how the new system works are expected to prosper under the fee-for-service system. (In fact, a special consultant has been hired by DSHS to work with providers and educate them about the new fee-for-service system.)
- No significant change expected for non-Medicaid funding or contract requirements

Who can consumers call with concerns about the services being provided?

Call Pierce County Mental Health Ombuds at 253-798-6123

Who can providers or legislators contact with other questions?

Two key members of the Pierce County workgroup will be able to help with detailed questions. Please e-mail or phone Andy Toulon (TOULLOAN@dshs.wa.gov 236-902-0818) or Melena Thompson (THOMPML@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-0818).