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State Senior and Disabilities Services works with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to improve oversight

Partnership with the federal agency helps raise bar on program management

(Anchorage, AK) — The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services today responded to a preliminary review of some of Alaska’s Medicaid-funded programs by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), thanking CMS for its oversight assistance, offering clarification on some points and requesting additional information.

The CMS review placed a moratorium on new applications for the state’s Medicaid waiver programs, which allow use of Medicaid funds for home- and community-based care programs, and for Personal Care services. The review also raised concerns about operational and programmatic oversight of each. The department will submit a corrective action plan by Sept. 1.

“We welcome this opportunity to work with CMS to improve oversight and tracking of our programs and services,” said DHSS Commissioner William Hogan. “CMS seeks increasingly sophisticated measures of quality of care, which the department fully supports. The improvements CMS requests are consistent with efforts already underway within the department, and we look forward to working with CMS to raise the bar for health and social service programs in Alaska.”

The moratorium allows the department’s Division of Senior and Disabilities Services to improve oversight systems and complete a backlog of eligibility reassessments required for people to continue receiving services.

The division is also exploring ways to utilize other programs to support Alaskans in need during the moratorium. “Alaska is fortunate to have a dedicated, caring community of providers,”

Commissioner Hogan said, “and the state will continue to support them as they provide essential services to their clients and clients’ families.”

Both the initial review by CMS and the state’s response are attached. The preliminary review, delivered to the state June 26, 2009, listed areas of concern. The state sought clarification from CMS on several points before releasing the document in order to accurately inform concerned Alaskans about the issues and resolution process.

The department agrees that quality tracking systems need to be improved; however, some concerns identified in the report are being questioned and some strengths were not documented in CMS’ initial review.

“We now understand any inaccuracies or questions will be resolved over the next few weeks as we put together our corrective plan,” Hogan said.

The CMS preliminary review, DHSS response and related information can be found at <http://hss.state.ak.us/dsds/cmsreview>.

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Attachment: CMS review letter and appendix, DHSS response letter