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Moratorium lifted from Alaska's Medicaid waiver programs

State now taking new applications for home and community care

(Anchorage, AK) — The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has lifted its moratorium on new applications to Alaska's four Medicaid waiver programs. The programs provide home- and community-based care for Alaskans with serious health needs who would otherwise require care in a hospital, nursing home or other facility.

"All vulnerable Alaskans can now apply for Medicaid waivers again," said Bill Hogan, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services. "We know people have been waiting, and I thank all the families and providers for the support they've provided during this time, CMS for its assistance, and DHSS staff for their hard work to end this moratorium."

On June 26, 2009, CMS placed a temporary hold on new applications to the waiver programs and Personal Care Assistance services for Alaskans who need help with basic daily living skills such as bathing and dressing. The federal agency cited concerns about a backlog of annual needs re-evaluations and administrative procedures.

Earlier this month, CMS lifted the hold from the Personal Care Assistance services, and earlier this week granted the state's request to allow emergency applications to the waiver programs.

The state has made progress on several CMS concerns by hiring new staff; updating provider training and offering it online; and adopting electronic assessment tools to increase efficiency and reduce the chance of errors.

"We're thrilled to open these programs again," said Senior and Disabilities Services Director Rebecca Hilgendorf. "We have many more improvements underway for our home- and community-based services, and look forward to completing them with CMS' ongoing assistance."

An overall corrective action plan is due to CMS by Sept. 3. CMS and the department will then collaborate on approval of the plan, a process that could take months.

For background information, see <http://hss.state.ak.us/dsds/cmsreview>.

Providers and Medicaid recipients with questions may contact Angela Salerno at (907) 465-4874, or angela.salerno@alaska.gov.

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CMS letter dated Aug. 27 attached

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