



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 16, 2015

Contact: Dawnell Smith, 907-269-4541, cell 907-903-9940, Dawnell.smith@alaska.gov;
Susan Morgan, 907-269-4996, cell 907-223-8389, Susan.morgan@alaska.gov

Governor Walker takes important step toward Medicaid expansion

DHSS prepared to help Alaskans gain access to health care

ANCHORAGE — Today, Alaska Governor Bill Walker sent a letter to the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee giving members the required 45-day notice of his intention to accept additional federal and Mental Health Trust Fund Authority money to expand Medicaid in Alaska.

The Department of Health and Social Services stands ready to implement Medicaid expansion.

“DHSS staff have been working diligently to prepare for Medicaid expansion,” Health and Social Services Commissioner Valerie Davidson said. “The new Medicaid claims payment system that had a rocky start two years ago is now working, and the new eligibility and enrollment system is being modified to automate and streamline the process for review and approval of applications.”

Nearly 42,000 Alaskans will be eligible for expansion. Approximately 21,000 Alaskans are expected to enroll in the first year.

Beyond the improvement in health coverage and saved lives, Medicaid expansion will bring \$146 million in new federal revenue to Alaska in the first year. Alaska misses out on \$400,000 each day the state doesn't act on Medicaid expansion. If Alaska had expanded on Jan. 1, 2014, over \$220 million in new federal money would have come to Alaska to date, providing a much-needed boost to our economy.

The department has been working on reforms to improve the Medicaid program, Davidson said. “We have continued and enhanced existing reform initiatives, such as improvements to fraud and abuse controls, pharmacy reform initiatives and care management for ‘super utilizers’ of emergency room services. The department is also in the process of implementing additional

reforms, and recently awarded a contract for technical assistance to help us identify even more opportunities for redesign of the program.”

Expanding Medicaid is vital to fulfilling DHSS’ mission: To promote and protect the health and well-being of Alaskans.

Find out more about Medicaid and Medicaid expansion at:

http://dhss.alaska.gov/News/Documents/press/2015/Medicaid_Expansion_July15.pdf,

<http://gov.alaska.gov/Walker/priorities/accessible-healthcare.html> and

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/HealthyAlaska/Pages/default.aspx>.