

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES  
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Medicaid Reform Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

LOCATION

Governor's Council Conference Room  
3601 C Street  
Anchorage, Alaska  
Teleconference

Meeting Date

November 28, 2011  
1:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Ric Nelson, Chair  
Emily Ennis  
Kathy Fitzgerald

Guests:

Dayna McGuire

Staff:

Carrie Predeger

Prepared by:

Jeannette Rice, Peninsula Reporting

**Call to Order – 1:30 p.m.**

**Roll Call**

**READING OF THE COUNCIL MISSION**

Ric Nelson recited the Council's mission statement.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Kathy Fitzgerald **MOVED** to approve the agenda. The motion **PASSED**.

**INTRODUCTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, OR GOOD NEWS**

None to report.

**NEW BUSINESS**

*Why was this committee formed?*

Commissioner Streur asked in a meeting in September if the Council could help find effective ways to trim the budget for Medicaid, so Ric Nelson asked the Executive Committee to form a Medicaid Reform Ad Hoc Committee because he has seen a lot of waste in the Medicaid system.

Discussion ensued about costs and waiver services. SDS has information posted on their website about home and community based waivers and personal care assistant trends showing that annual growth is slowing although more people are being served. However, this report does not show overall growth in Medicaid; Carrie Predeger and Emily Ennis discussed difficulties they have had in trying to get current numbers on that. Emily said that Duane Mayes did a good report to the commission on older Alaskans and Medicare, which led to discussion of the lack of Medicare providers and the high cost of health care in Alaska compared to other states. Emily noted that the commission is starting by looking at the big picture and it will take some time before they get to individual issues like waivers.

## What is this committee's charge?

Ric Nelson explained that members of this committee should work on identifying waste in Medicaid and figuring out how it can be improved.

Kathy Fitzgerald listed three examples of wastefulness that always come up in these discussions:

- Cost of travel: Medicaid airline tickets compared to personal ticket prices
- Supplies: High prices for diapers, wipes, etc., through Medicaid suppliers compared to local merchants or online purchases
- Audits: Five annual audits cost a lot of money and energy

## Assessments

Emily Ennis stated that doing repeated assessments to redetermine eligibility is another high-cost practice that could be more efficient.

Discussion ensued about finding out what other states do, and Emily noted that the October 19<sup>th</sup> letter from the Governor's Council to the senators had recommended simple, consistent Medicaid directives for all states.

## Equipment and supplies

Ric Nelson wants to look at equipment costs. Dayna McGuire explained that they knew someone who had safety bars installed in their bathroom through Medicaid. Dayna then called as a private citizen about the same safety bars and was given a price \$250 lower. Medical suppliers charge Medicaid as much as they can. Diapers are another example.

## Self-directed waivers

Ric Nelson suggested comparing the cost of self-directed and regular waivers, but currently there are no self-directed waivers for comparison. Kathy Fitzgerald said that self-directed waivers are more work for the user, but they save money. The legislature has turned down the idea before, but maybe it should be among the committee's recommendations.

## Travel

Kathy Fitzgerald commented that Medicaid tickets are much more expensive than privately purchased tickets. Dayna McGuire noted that people often travel to a hub repeatedly for various appointments, and it would save money to combine the trips. Kathy Fitzgerald also pointed out that the rule of booking tickets after the first of the month of the

appointment often results in higher-priced tickets.

### How will this committee work?

Ric Nelson said that everybody should talk to people in their communities about their concerns and bring the information back to the committee.

For next month, Ric and Dayna will shop for some products and airline tickets through Medicaid compared to privately. Kathy Fitzgerald said that they need to know what the rules are regarding going through Medicaid vendors; Carrie Predeger will look up the regulations and send them out for everyone to read. Emily Ennis will try to get information from ANCOR on how other states handle determining eligibility, reassessments, and audits.

### **TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Ric Nelson explained that he would like to meet once a month for the first three months, and every other month thereafter.

December will be busy, so everyone will report information by e-mail. Carrie Predeger will send out a Doodle with potential dates for a January meeting.

### **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:42 p.m.