



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

June 7, 2024

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Bldg.
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
121 House Office Bldg.
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: 2023 Joint Chairmen’s Report (p. 129-130) - Report on Home and Community-Based Options Waiver Care Plan Backlog - February 2024)

Pursuant to the requirements of the 2023 Joint Chairmen’s Report (p. 129-130), the Department of Health (the Department) submits this report on the Community Options waiver care plan backlog. Specifically, the report addresses the impacts of this backlog on waiver applicants, participants and home and community-based services (HCBS) providers, such as delays in accessing HCBS and increased risk of hospitalization. The committees required the Department to submit monthly reports beginning July 1, 2023, on the progress in addressing the outstanding plan of service backlog. The report discusses current efforts underway and the great strides the Department is making to address the care plan backlog, including building internal and external resource capacity, and developing technological solutions to streamline processes that create cost-effective efficiencies. In addition, the report details the following information in the aggregate and by county:

- the average number of days to approve a plan;
- the total number of pending plans at the beginning of each month;
- the number of new plans received in the prior month; and
- the number of plans approved by the end of the prior month.

Background

The Department’s Medicaid Office of Long Term Services and Supports (OLTSS) operates and/or oversees several HCBS programs. Of importance for this Joint Chairmen's Report (JCR) is the Home and Community-Based Options Waiver (HCBOW or “Community Options Waiver”), Community First Choice (CFC), Community Personal Assistance Services (CPAS), and Increased Community Services (ICS) programs. The four (4) aforementioned programs are impacted by the plan of service (POS) backlog reported during the 2023 legislative session.

Plan of Service Metrics

As requested by the committee, the average number of days to approve a plan, total number of pending plans at the beginning of each month, and the number of plans that received a decision

within 30 days (one (1) month) are reported in Table 1 below for January 2023 through December 2023. The metrics reported are inclusive of initial, provisional, revised, and annual POS for applicants and participants in the HCBOW, CFC, CPAS, and ICS programs. OLTSS collaborated with the Hilltop Institute¹ to disaggregate the POS data by county as requested by the committees. As such, Table 2 below reflects the disaggregated care plan data by county.

Table 1: Aggregated Care Plan Data

Month/Year	Average # of days to approve a plan	Total # of pending plans at the beginning of the month	# of plans receiving a decision in less than 30 days
January 2023	122	12,567	445
February 2023	144	12,886	347
March 2023	187	12,914	390
April 2023	137	13,394	265
May 2023	149	13,868	339
June 2023	148	14,347	257
July 2023	130	14,730	204
August 2023	148	14,925	215
September 2023	149	14,932	234
October 2023	138	14,982	308
November 2023	196	14,091	240
December 2023	119	13,799	175

Table 2: December 2023 Care Plan Data by County

County	Average # of days to approve a plan	Total # of pending plans at the beginning of the month	# of plans receiving a decision in less than 30 days
Allegany	116	151	2
Anne Arundel	111	661	9

¹ The Hilltop Institute is a nonpartisan research organization at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. The Hilltop Institute collaborates with the Department to conduct objective, evidence-based research and analysis to inform state health policy.

Baltimore	117	2,318	37
Baltimore City	126	2,658	39
Calvert	102	102	2
Caroline	96	109	0
Carroll	42	170	7
Cecil	136	200	1
Charles	123	287	1
Dorchester	102	105	2
Frederick	107	306	3
Garrett	71	128	1
Harford	109	430	6
Howard	125	866	8
Kent	91	48	1
Montgomery	121	2,630	36
Prince George's	121	1,574	12
Queen Anne's	651	40	0
Somerset	62	109	2
St. Mary's	132	122	2
Talbot	63	61	0
Washington	128	227	1
Wicomico	132	268	1
Worcester	109	142	2
Other ²	81	87	0

² "Other" represents zip codes outside of Maryland. Upon review of the plan of service, OLTSS staff will determine if the client meets the technical criteria (e.g.; Maryland residency) before rendering a decision. If these individuals do not live in the state of Maryland, they will not meet technical eligibility and, therefore, their plan will be denied.

Remediation Strategies

As noted in earlier iterations of this monthly joint chairmen's report, the Department's Utilization Control Agent (UCA), Telligen, is expected to assume responsibility for rendering care plan determinations on POS beginning March 1, 2024, after participating in an eight-week intensive training program led by the Department. Telligen is working diligently to onboard staff in preparation for the training; however, it has not filled all clinical and non-clinical positions required to perform care plan determinations on POS. As such, training will commence in late February resulting in Telligen assuming responsibility for care plan determinations on POS beginning April 1, 2024 instead of March 1, 2024 as previously reported.

The Department has budget authority to enhance its data management system, *LTSSMaryland*, to allow auto-approval (i.e., no manual review required) of annual plans meeting specified criteria. This system enhancement has moved to the testing phase and is expected to be implemented in *LTSSMaryland* in April 2024. The Department continues to deploy its monthly semi-auto-approval process as an interim measure with the January 2024 deployment resulting in two annual plans pending the Department's review being approved.

The Department continues to partner with Supports Planning Agencies to increase capacity and eliminate the waitlist for the assignment of a supports planner. These efforts continue to prove successful as there continues to be no waitlist for a supports planner and program applicants and participants are assigned to a supports planner immediately to assist them with navigating the Medicaid enrollment process and accessing Medicaid and non-Medicaid home and community-based services and supports.

OLTSS continues to actively recruit for vacant positions via several social media platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Handshake) and various stakeholder networks. Four Health Policy Analysts have recently been selected to fill vacant contractual roles, and are awaiting their official offer letters. One Medical Care Program Specialist vacated her role in January 2024. The remaining vacancies include 16 contractual positions and 5 merit positions for a total of 21 vacant positions (4 Social Workers, 12 Health Policy Analysts, 4 Medical Care Program Specialists, and 1 Administrator).

The Department's OLTSS and Eligibility Determination Division (EDD) has established a means to identify time-sensitive waiver applications and is prioritizing those plans of service for those individuals whose application is nearing the end of its six-month life cycle. This process will be ongoing as the Department conducts mailings to reduce its registry and the care plan backlog.

If you have any comments or questions about this subject, please contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs, at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

CC: Marie Grant, JD, Assistant Secretary for Health Policy
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