



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 – March 2024)

Pursuant to the requirements of the 2023 Joint Chairmen’s Report (p. 129-130), the Department of Health (MDH) 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 MDH 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 MDH 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

MDH’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 January 2024. 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
January 2024	168	14,296	298

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

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	212	160	1
Anne Arundel	211	691	20
Baltimore	176	2,413	49
Baltimore City	169	2,713	54
Calvert	290	105	2
Caroline	264	108	0
Carroll	114	184	6
Cecil	87	205	6
Charles	205	307	7
Dorchester	172	110	4
Frederick	89	330	10
Garrett	1	131	1
Harford	198	434	5
Howard	145	913	25
Kent	161	51	0
Montgomery	180	2,736	51
Prince George's	148	1,604	30
Queen Anne's	362	37	0
Somerset	159	111	4
St. Mary's	27	131	7
Talbot	185	61	1

Washington	140	245	6
Wicomico	159	276	7
Worcester	65	146	2
Other ²	0	94	0

Remediation Strategies

As emphasized in previous versions of this monthly joint chairmen’s report, the Department's Utilization Control Agent (UCA), Telligen, will assume responsibility for care plan determinations on POS, following an intensive eight-week training program facilitated by MDH. Telligen will assume responsibility for the plan of service determinations for both the backlog and new care plans on May 1, 2024.

The implementation of the auto-approval process, originally scheduled for April 2024 for annual plans meeting specified criteria, has advanced to March 11, 2024. As such, MDH’s data management system, *LTSSMaryland*, will assess all current annual plans pending MDH’s decision as of March 11, 2024 for auto-approval criteria. Any plans meeting the specified criteria will be auto-approved. Following the deployment of this system enhancement, all newly submitted annual plans will undergo immediate evaluation against the auto-approval criteria, with those meeting the requirements being auto-approved without delay.

MDH 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 and one Social Worker Advanced have been selected to fill vacant contractual roles, and are awaiting their official offer letters. The remaining vacancies include 16 contractual positions and 4 merit positions for a total of 21 vacant positions (3 Social Workers, 12 Health Policy Analysts, 4 Medical Care Program Specialists, 1 Administrator, and 1 Administrative Officer).

MDH’s OLTSS and Eligibility Determination Division (EDD) has established a means to identify time-sensitive waiver applications and are 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 MDH conducts mailings to reduce its registry and the care plan backlog.

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.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LH Scott".

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

Secretary