



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 - October 2023)

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

- 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 below for January 2023 through August 2023. The

metrics report below are inclusive of initial, provisional, revised, and annual POS for applicants and participants in the HCBOW, CFC, CPAS, and ICS programs.

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

OLTSS continues to actively recruit for vacant positions via several social media platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Handshake) and various stakeholder networks. Since the last report, September 2023, OLTSS has hired four additional staff members to perform daily tasks needed to operate the three (3) divisions in OLTSS that support the Community Options Waiver, CFC, CPAS, and ICS programs. The remaining vacancies include 21 contractual positions and 5 merit positions for a total of 26 vacant positions.

The Department’s Utilization Control Agent (UCA) contract was awarded to Maryland’s incumbent, Telligen, on June 8, 2023 with an expected implementation date of January 1, 2024. The Department conducts ongoing meetings with the UCA to establish, review, and enhance business requirements for the requisite tasks that it will perform under the new contract. The UCA is expected to assume responsibility for rendering care plan determinations on newly submitted POS beginning March 1, 2024; after participating in an eight-week intensive training program led by the Department.

In previous iterations of this monthly report, the Department reported its efforts to solicit a temporary contractor for backlogged POS through the request for proposal (RFP) process. However, the Department entered into discussions with Telligen to explore a contract modification, which would expedite review of the backlogged POS. This modification will broaden Telligen’s scope of work to include backlogged POS instead of only newly submitted POS. Once the contract modification has been finalized, it must complete the State’s procurement process, which includes a request for approval at an upcoming Board of Public Works (BPW) meeting. The Department’s goal is to achieve this approval at the December 13, 2023 BPW meeting.

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 is in the design phase and is expected to be implemented in LTSS*Maryland* in spring 2024.

As communicated in last month's report, 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. As of September 18, 2023, OLTSS and EDD have identified 472 cases to prioritize. This process will be ongoing as the Department conducts wave mailings to reduce its registry and the care plan backlog.

The Department has partnered closely with its Supports Planning Agency (SPA) network to assist with building capacity, participate in training and technical assistance sessions, and ultimately eliminate the long-standing waitlist for a SPA assignment. Several SPAs have increased their capacity to support additional clients while maintaining the required supports planner to client ratios. The Department is happy to report that these efforts continue to prove successful as there is no longer a waitlist for the assignment of a supports planner. This is an enriching experience that provides immediate case management support to assist clients with navigating Maryland Medicaid's enrollment process and accessing Medicaid and non-Medicaid home and community-based services and supports.

If you have any comments or questions about this subject, please contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director, Office 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
Ryan Moran, DrPH, Deputy Secretary, Health Care Financing and Medicaid
Sarah Case-Herron, JD, Director, Office of Governmental Affairs
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