![Maryland Department of Health logo]

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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

May 15, 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 - May 2024)

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 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 March 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 Institute[1] 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
February 2024	155	14,573	306
March 2024	153	15,141	264

---

[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.

Table 2: March 2024 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	134	183	3
Anne Arundel	150	761	13
Baltimore	161	2,586	43
Baltimore City	139	2,836	55
Calvert	233	121	2
Caroline	162	106	2
Carroll	65	210	9
Cecil	180	218	4
Charles	170	321	6
Dorchester	182	125	0
Frederick	87	353	8
Garrett	262	139	2
Harford	205	461	6
Howard	134	933	17
Kent	118	52	0
Montgomery	172	2,844	53
Prince George's	139	1,673	21
Queen Anne's	55	42	1
Somerset	135	126	5
St. Mary's	153	141	2
Talbot	5	69	1

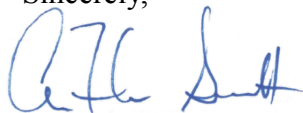|			
Washington	64	264	4
Wicomico	223	313	4
Worcester	195	163	3
Other[2]	N/A	101	N/A

Remediation Strategies

In February 2024, the Department's Utilization Control Agent (UCA), Telligen, began an intensive eight-week training program led by the Department to assume responsibility for plan determinations for both the backlog and new care plans. This training program concludes in mid-May, after which Telligen's first cohort of seven (7) POS reviewers will independently make plan determinations. Telligen plans to hire a second cohort of POS reviewers in June 2024, bringing the total number of clinical and non-clinical reviewers to 15. The backlog is expected to be resolved in February 2025, and future reports will provide updates on any changes to anticipated completion. During this period, both the Department and Telligen staff will concurrently conduct plan determinations for both the backlog and new care plans.

Various initiatives have been implemented to resolve the POS backlog, as reported in earlier versions of this report. These include the initiation of an auto-approval process for annual plans meeting specified criteria, the elimination of the waitlist for the assignment of a supports planner, and the development of a strategy by OLTSS and the Eligibility Determination Division to identify time-sensitive waiver applications and prioritize plans of service.

OLTSS continues active recruitment for vacant positions through multiple social media platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Handshake) and various stakeholder networks. In April 2024, four (4) Health Policy Analysts were hired. Currently, there are 18 contractual positions and 4 merit positions vacant, totaling 22 vacant positions (4 Social Workers, 11 Health Policy Analysts, 5 Medical Care Program Specialists, 1 Administrator, and 1 Administrative Officer).

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

---

[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.