

Illinois seeking flexibility to improve delivery of behavioral health care

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-Federal approval will allow for better coordination and integration of care-

--Will allow Illinois to invest \$2.7 billion more effectively in prevention and early interventions--

SPRINGFIELD – The Rauner Administration, led by the Governor's Office and Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), in coordination with eleven other

state agencies, unveiled its proposal to transform the delivery of behavioral health services in the State of Illinois.

Today, the Administration has released for public comment its request to the federal government to waive certain Medicaid requirements that will increase care coordination and delivery of services treating mental illness and substance use. This transformation focuses on behavioral health and treatment by increasing access to community services, while improving overall public health through better integration with other health services.

“There is an urgent need in the state to transform the delivery of care to those dealing with mental illness and substance use in a compassionate way,” Governor Rauner said. “We have to treat the whole person to have a more meaningful and lasting impact on that person’s life. The changes we are seeking will allow us to intervene earlier and increase access to services, leading to more stability and allow them to lead a more productive life. It also helps our communities better deal with the significant social costs that result when people cannot get the care they need.”

Through this strategy, Illinois is requesting to use \$2.7 billion in federal Medicaid funds that would not otherwise be offered. This money will be invested in early interventions and infrastructure over the next five years to improve quality of care delivered while avoiding more costly admissions and treatment. The state will experience savings through better care coordination, giving state agencies the ability to redirect resources and drawing down federal funding to help pay for those services.

"By focusing on innovative health strategies that pay for value, quality and outcomes, as well as maximizing federal assistance that has not been sought in the past, the goal of this proposal is to build a behavioral health system that provides comprehensive, integrated care to some of the most vulnerable people in our state in a fiscally sustainable way," HFS Director Felicia Norwood said.

A key component of the waiver is accelerating the shift in care from institutions to community settings. This allows the state to be more compassionate by redirecting resources and increasing access to care of our most vulnerable populations.

“The Department of Human Services (IDHS) is committed to serving our individuals in the least restrictive setting possible,” Secretary Jim Dimas said. “The waiver will significantly expand services in the community to promote independence and meet individuals’ needs closer to their neighborhoods. Through additional crisis management resources, readily available opiate addiction treatments and early intervention for our vulnerable youth, we will be able to provide the right type of care in the right setting at the right time.”

The waiver will allow Illinois to use innovative health strategies and will address mental health and substance use treatment for people of all ages, including children, who are our most vulnerable population.

“We can change the arc of these children’s lives if we can intervene early with the comprehensive services they need for the trauma they endured through abuse and neglect,” says Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Director George H. Sheldon. “We have to give kids home settings in their communities instead of putting them in group care. This waiver will give DCFS new tools to break the cycles of family abuse, and we can lower the risks of more problems later in their lives.”

The waiver allows Illinois to take a holistic look at the individual and better coordinate their care across all state agencies. One prime example is the effort to better coordinate behavioral health services for prison and jail inmates prior to their release. This is another step in achieving overall criminal justice reform by reducing recidivism and making Illinois communities safer.

“This waiver will have an enormous impact on offenders being released from the prison system by addressing behavioral health issues earlier so they can reenter safely into Illinois communities,” IDOC Acting Director John Baldwin said. “This transformation will allow IDOC and community service providers to collaborate and work together before the offender’s release to establish housing, treatment plans and a single source for the care and treatment of offenders with behavioral health issues. I am convinced it will have a long-term, positive impact on offenders with behavioral health issues reentering society.”

Twelve state agencies and the governor’s office, as well as community partners and advocates, worked together to develop this waiver. The state sought input from more than 2,000 stakeholders, incorporating the overwhelming majority of the 200 responses in written feedback. The state will hold public hearings next month to gather further input from stakeholders. The state hopes to work with the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to finalize the waiver prior to the end of the year.