

Illinois submits medicaid waiver to improve delivery of behavioral healthcare

October 13 2016 11:50 AM



SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rauner joined agency directors, local officials and stakeholders today to announce Illinois has officially submitted the 1115 Medicaid waiver proposal to the federal government. This waiver will allow Illinois to use innovative health strategies for better coordination and integrated care, and will address behavioral health and substance abuse treatment for some of our most vulnerable residents.

“Illinois is transforming the way we provide behavioral and mental health care services to our residents,” Governor Rauner said. “This waiver focuses on helping the whole person by getting the right services to the right person in the right setting at the right

time. I want to thank our agency directors, especially Directors Norwood and Sheldon and Secretary Dimas, for their work on this waiver. I also want to thank the hundreds of stakeholders who provided input and feedback to make our waiver proposal even stronger.”

Historically, the state has spent most of its resources—tens of billions of dollars—on a broken patchwork of reactive, expensive, and ineffective interventions. This waiver allows Illinois to take a holistic look at the individual and better coordinate their care across all state agencies. The changes the Administration is seeking will allow the State to intervene earlier and increase access to services, leading to more stability and a more productive life.

"With this waiver, we will be able to build a behavioral health system that offers integrated and comprehensive care focused on the whole person, and by maximizing federal assistance, we will be able to achieve this goal in a fiscally sustainable way," Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services Director Felicia Norwood said.

"I thank the Rauner Administration for recognizing the behavioral and mental health challenges we face in Illinois and their willingness to confront them," Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) said.

"I am excited that the State of Illinois has submitted a Section 1115 Waiver proposal to the federal government as part of its plan to strengthen behavioral health services in our State and make them more accessible and affordable," Rep. Kathleen Willis (D - Addison) said. "I am also pleased the State conducted an extensive stakeholder engagement process which gave hundreds of citizens and organizations an opportunity for input as the plan was being developed. This will be a first of its kind program that has wide support throughout the provider community and the legislature. I look forward to working with all of the departments that collaborated in this process in order to implement what will be an exciting new era in Illinois history."

This waiver was developed from the collaboration between 12 state agencies and the Governor's Office, as well as community partners and stakeholders. The state sought input from more than 2,000 stakeholders and incorporated feedback from roughly 200 written responses. The State also held public hearings 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 as soon as possible.

Through this waiver, 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 the quality of care delivered while avoiding more costly admissions and treatment.

"The State's Medicaid Waiver is incredibly important for cities like Rockford that experience the challenge of high rates of poverty and crime coupled with unmet behavioral health needs," Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey said.

"We are particularly pleased to work with the state on ways we can enhance behavioral health services to the population in Cook County Jail, many of whom find themselves there as a direct result of mental health and substance abuse issues," Deputy CEO Finance and Strategy of Cook County Health and Hospital System Doug Elwell said.

"It is exciting to see the state make this commitment to increased access to and integration of behavioral health into the Medicaid system," said Kari M. Wolf, MD, Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at SIU School of Medicine. "In my career I have seen first-hand how the 1115 Waiver process can transform behavioral health care delivery."

Video of the event will be posted [here](#).