

MENTAL RETARDATION BULLETIN



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

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SUBJECT

Medical Assistance for Children

BY

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SCOPE: County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Administrators
Base Service Unit Directors
County Child and Adolescent Service System Programs (CASSP)
Coordinators
Psychiatric Outpatient Clinic Directors
Psychiatric Partial Hospitalization Program Directors
Family-Based Mental Health Service Directors

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Bulletin is to transmit information about a Departmental initiative which is extremely important to the children that you serve, and to seek your support and assistance in making this effort a success.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Public Welfare has initiated an aggressive outreach campaign for the purpose of enrolling children in the Medical Assistance Program. Children who do not have insurance coverage to meet their medical needs may be involved in programs under your jurisdiction and may be eligible for Medical Assistance.

The provision of appropriate and timely medical care has obvious implications for children with mental retardation and mental illness in assuring their health, safety and ability to receive educational and mental retardation and mental health services.

In order to facilitate the enrollment process, several actions have been taken. The first set of action steps were dedicated to program expansion and improvement. In January 1993, the eligibility threshold for pregnant women and children through the first year of life was raised to 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. Further, in June 1993, the asset test was eliminated for families containing children under the age of 21. Also, a simplified medical assistance application form has been developed and is now in use.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

Office of Mental Health – Area Children's Mental Health Specialist
Office of Mental Retardation – Regional Program Managers

BACKGROUND (cont.)

It is important to note that it is permissible for agencies to assist their clients in completing a medical assistance application and to forward the application to the local county assistance office (CAO). If the application is complete and verification attached, the CAOs can determine eligibility without requiring that the family have an appointment at the CAO.

DISCUSSION

In concert with these program improvements, CAOs which are responsible for the provision of medical assistance, were challenged to conduct local level outreach activities. The purpose of these outreach activities is to provide information about the Medical Assistance Program and its services, to encourage other child serving agencies to assist in the application for medical assistance, and to form ongoing service partner relationships.

The Office of Mental Retardation fully supports the medical assistance outreach initiative and encourages you to begin assisting the people you see to apply for medical assistance. Your first step in this effort is to contact the outreach coordinator at the local CAO. You will be provided with information about eligibility for the Medical Assistance Program and its services, how to secure applications and other informational materials (which are free to you), and technical assistance on how to assist in the application taking process.

In addition, the Office of Mental Health recommends that the Base Service Units and all mental health services providers check monthly on the child's medical assistance current status before submitting invoices for Medical Assistance reimbursement. There may be changes in the child's eligibility of fee-for-service/Health Maintenance Organization status which affects payment for the services rendered.