Section 1135 Medicaid Waiver Authority – Texas

Background
When the President of the United States declares a disaster or emergency under the Stafford Act or National Emergencies Act and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary declares a public health emergency under Section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, the HHS Secretary is authorized to use Section 1135 of the Social Security Act to modify certain Medicare, Medicaid, and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) requirements in order to allow states to respond to the emergency.

On March 30, 2020, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) approved Texas’s Section 1135 waiver, accessible here.

On May 22, 2020, CMS approved Texas’s 2nd Section 1135 waiver, accessible here.

On July 23, 2020, CMS approved Texas’s 3rd Section 1135 waiver, accessible here.

On September 30, 2020, CMS approved Texas’ 4th Section 1135 waiver, accessible here.

This one-pager is meant to be a general guide and is not an exhaustive description of the waiver.

What does Texas’s Section 1135 waiver look like?
The waiver makes several changes to Texas’s Medicaid program, as outlined below:

Provider Enrollment
CMS authorized Texas to expedite the enrollment of out of state providers who are not currently enrolled in the state’s Medicaid program. Texas may continue to use existing procedures to enroll out of state providers who are already in the state’s Medicaid program (with one small exception, CMS is waiving the limit on claims within a 180 day period).

CMS has also authorized providers not currently enrolled in Medicare or another state’s Medicaid agency to temporarily enroll in Texas’s programs. To make this possible, Texas will be allowed to waive application fee requirements, criminal background checks, site visits, and state licensure requirements. However, the program provider must maintain an out of state license. To these temporarily authorized providers, Texas must cease payment within six months of the emergency declaration being lifted, unless the providers submit an application for full participation in the program and are approved.
Pre-Approval Requirements
Texas is also authorized to temporarily waive or modify pre-approval requirements for Medicaid procedures through its fee for service program.

State fair hearing requests and appeal deadlines
Texas is approved to modify the timeline under which managed care enrollees can request an appeal of a denial of services. Enrollees may request a state fair hearing immediately, bypassing the requirement to exhaust all appeals with their managed care organization. Further, Texas is authorized to waive the 120 day deadline for enrollees to file an appeal with the state, provided the 120 day deadline would have occurred during the period of the public health emergency. Managed care recipients in that situation will receive an additional 120 days to file their appeal for a state fair hearing.

Texas also has the flexibility to allow recipients to have “more than 90 days” to request a state fair hearing for eligibility or fee for service issues.

1915(k) Community First Choice State Plan Option Level of Care Determination and Redetermination Timeline
Texas can modify the deadline for conducting initial evaluations of eligibility and initial assessments of need to establish a care plan. These activities no longer have to be completed before the start of care. Services will continue until the assessment can occur.

1915(i) HCBS State Plan Option Required Timeframe for Initial Evaluations and Assessments, and Re-evaluations and Reassessments
Texas can modify the deadline for conducting initial evaluations of eligibility and initial assessments of need to establish a care plan. These activities no longer have to be completed before the start of care. Iowa may also modify the deadline for annual redetermination of eligibility and the annual reassessment of need. Services will continue under re-evaluation and reassessment can occur.

1915(c) HCBS Waiver Level of Care Determination and Redetermination Timeline
Texas can modify the deadline for conducting initial evaluations of eligibility and initial assessments of need to establish a care plan. These activities no longer have to be completed before the start of care. Services will continue until the assessment can occur.

Requirement to Obtain Beneficiary and Provider Signatures of HCBS Person-Centered Service Plan
Texas may temporarily waive written consent requirements for person-centered service plans. Providers are authorized to obtain documented verbal consent from the beneficiary and those responsible for its implementation.
HCBS Settings Requirements for Specified Settings
Texas may offer home and community based services (HCBS) be provided in settings that have not been determined to meet HCBS setting criteria. This applies to settings that have been added since March 17, 2014 and is designed to ensure continuity of services.

SPA Flexibilities: Public Notice
Texas has also been approved to modify the public notice period associated with any emergency SPA that they file to address COVID-19. This applies only to emergency provisions that will sunset at the end of the emergency. No guidance is given as to how much this period may be shortened.

How does this affect Tribes?
If a state seeks a Section 1135 waiver, Tribes are impacted by its provisions. Texas has 3 federally recognized Tribes, Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas, and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo.
Medicaid Disaster State Plan Amendment – Texas

Background
The Medicaid State Plan is the foundational document for a state’s Medicaid program; it sets the rules for eligibility, benefits, and payments. Before a state can participate in the Medicaid program, it must file a state plan with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). There are certain requirements that a state plan must adhere to and if a state wishes to deviate from these statutory requirements, they must seek a waiver (such as a Section 1115 or Section 1915 waiver) of the usual Medicaid rules. When a state wants to amendment their State Plan, they have to file what is called a “State Plan Amendment” (SPA).

On June 15, 2020, Texas was approved for an Emergency State Plan Amendment in order to respond to COVID-19. You can find that here.

On August 21, 2020, Texas was approved for a second Emergency SPA. You can find that here.

On October 23, 2020, Texas approved for a third Emergency SPA. You can find that here.

All approvals are for the duration of the federally declared COVID-19 emergency, unless stated otherwise.

Payment Rates
Texas is amending their State Plan in order to increase payment rates for certain supplies, imaging and testing services and Nursing Facility services. This will now be equal to the Medicare reimbursement rate. Payment increases for the nursing facility are temporarily increased though the current Medicaid RUG rates. HHSC increased the direct care staff average hourly wage by $2 per hour and increased the Supplies and Dietary categories by 50%. Lastly, this SPA added a temporary add-on supplemental payment for nursing facilities to support increased costs due to COVID-19.

They are also approved to reimburse for services for specimen collection, viral testing, antibody testing, and telephonic visits at rates that are equal to the Medicare reimbursement rate or comparable code for the duration of the COVID-19 federal emergency declaration.

Telehealth
Texas is amending their State Plan to modify the face to face requirements for those under a 1915(i) State Plan and allow certain services, when clinically appropriate, to be offered via telephone or telehealth.

Prior Authorization
Texas is amending their State Plan to extend all prior authorization by automatic renewal without clinical review or time/quantity extensions.
Questions?
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