

Letter to Medicaid Recipients Leads to More Questions than Answers

By: Karen Scallan, *Special Needs & Parent Support Services of LA, LLC.*

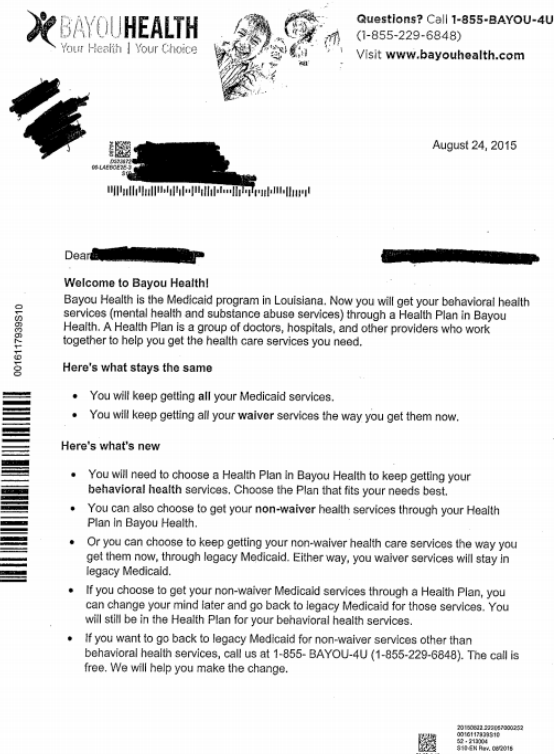
Did you receive a Bayou Health mailings recently? This one was confusing to say the least. It was sent to a wide variety of people, those with waiver services, some on the waiting list, but generally everyone who receives a service through Magellan and the Louisiana Behavioral Health Partnership should have gotten one.

Now before you say, we do not receive behavioral health services, please note, this could be just medication...ADHD medication for instance. In general, behavioral health services include mental health services from providers, any behavioral health medications, as well as addictive disorder treatment.

The letter indicates anyone receiving behavioral health services under Medicaid will have to choose a Bayou Health plan just for those services. According to the letter, it will be mandatory for Medicaid behavioral health care services, but health services under Bayou Health are still optional for waiver recipients.

Herein lies the problem...the letter sent was ambiguous and confusing up to and including the enrollment form that was NOT enrollment in behavioral health services only, but enrollment in health care services. If you do complete this form and send it in, thinking you are only signing up for a behavioral health plan, not so!

To further complicate things, individuals who call Bayou Health to say they are in an "optional" population and do not have to choose a plan are being told by the call center "ok" and nothing more. Without advocacy, this means they could be placed by Bayou Health in a plan for behavioral health, and possibly health care all without their



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knowledge.

Kathy Kliebert, Secretary for Department of Health and Hospitals is looking into the confusing nature of the mailing and Mark Thomas, Deputy Secretary over Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities indicated a statewide stakeholder meeting will be set sometime next week. This meeting will include a broad group of stakeholders and will be open to the public. They are working on broadcasting via webinar as well. Date and time are pending.

I have also advocated to the state that no forms returned from this mailer be accepted by Bayou Health unless State Medicaid personnel verify that the person understands what they are signing up for, all other forms received be shredded, the letter be recalled by the state, all communication from Medicaid to waiver recipients and those on the wait list should be run through stakeholders to ensure clarity of message, and the enrollment form be edited to reflect exactly what the enrollee is signing up for.

In the future, waiver recipients may in fact be faced with mandatory inclusion in Bayou Health health services. I have expressed to Kathy and Mark if that is the case, they must be allowed a “for cause” change of plans at that time if their health care physicians are not on their current plan used for behavioral health.

In the meantime, wait and take no action until you hear additional information and clarification. If you complete the form or choose a plan now, you may be enrolling in something you do not want or did not intend.

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