



ARIZONA PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY

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September 15, 2015

The Honorable Doug Ducey
Governor of the State of Arizona
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Ms. Monica Coury
Office of Intergovernmental Relations
AHCCCS
801 East Jefferson Street, Mail Drop 4200
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Dear Governor Ducey and Ms. Coury:

The Arizona Psychiatric Society offers the following comments on Governor Ducey's proposal for Modernizing Arizona Medicaid. The proposal includes some provisions which propel our healthcare system in a positive direction: promoting wellness, managing chronic disease, advancing electronic communications (including electronic health records), increasing value-based purchasing, strengthening integrated care, achieving accountability, preventing fraud, and reducing stigma. However, the proposal also raises substantial concerns. They relate to the issues of member contributions and lifetime eligibility requirements.

The recent Medicaid expansion has made healthcare more accessible to the working poor population. These individuals face tough choices in allocating their last few dollars going to food, rent, childcare, transportation, or healthcare. Requiring copays and monthly deposits will create a barrier to accessing healthcare. The predictable result will be situations where attending to health care needs is delayed until people are far sicker and their symptoms are intolerable. This, in turn will lead to more visits to emergency rooms and hospitalizations to fix problems that could have been avoided by accessing care earlier and with prevention measures. These consequences profoundly impact individuals' personal health, work, families, and finances.

The lifetime eligibility requirement of 5 years will also limit access. Many people work for more than five years in positions that pay below the federal poverty line. Losing Medicaid benefits because of that will again create instances where people do not access care in a reasonable time to address their symptoms. Most of the people whom this proposal addresses are working, and mostly they qualify as

PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF THOSE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND FOSTERING PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHIATRY

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“the working poor.” As psychiatrists, we often see patients who have difficulty recognizing the signs of mental illness and their need for treatment. The Governor’s proposal would simply make it less likely that they would obtain the care that they require in order to be safe and productive members of the community.

Implementation of the proposal will result in an increased number of people without adequate access to healthcare. In the long run, this will cost Arizona more in poor health outcomes, loss of work time, and money paid for emergency health care. In light of these concerns, we urge you to make revisions to the proposal to ensure Arizonans have timely access to healthcare without barriers.

Respectfully submitted,

Roland Segal, MD, President
Arizona Psychiatric Society