



State of Louisiana
Department of Health and Hospitals
Bureau of Health Services Financing

February 3, 2014

The Honorable Scott M. Simon
Chairman, Health and Welfare Committee
Louisiana House of Representatives
P.O. Box 4486, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4486

Dear Chairman Simon,

The Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) has reviewed HR 218 and we applaud your commitment to this issue. Louisiana Medicaid, operating under the Bureau of Health Services Financing, administers the Bayou Health program. DHH is committed to ensuring that Bayou Health, which provides health care services for the majority of Louisiana's Medicaid and LaCHIP enrollees, improves health outcomes for its members. Central to that strategy is ensuring that Bayou Health members have access to essential health benefits and screenings. Given the elevated incidence of HIV among Louisiana residents, we feel that HIV testing should be included in the routine medical screening performed by physicians. Furthermore, given that individuals born between 1945 and 1965 are five times more likely than other adults to be infected with hepatitis C and 75 percent of adults with hepatitis C were born in these years, we recommend that a single hepatitis C screening test also takes place during routine medical care for those individuals in this category.

DHH studied the feasibility and impact of requiring Medicaid providers to offer hepatitis C testing to individuals born between 1945 and 1965. Claims analysis revealed that in state fiscal year 2013, there were 161,971 enrollees in the 46-64 age group. Of these 161,971 enrollees only 874 had ever been screened for hepatitis C. Screening the remainder of the population would result in approximately \$2.5 million laboratory claims if screenings took place during a regularly scheduled office visit.

The Medicaid program also studied the feasibility and impact of requiring Medicaid providers to offer HIV testing to all individuals in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) most recent HIV testing guidelines. In all health-care settings, the CDC recommends screening for HIV infection for all patients between the ages of 13 and 64 years and at regular intervals for high risk populations. Health-care providers should initiate the screening unless the prevalence of undiagnosed HIV infection in their patients has been documented to be <0.1%. Louisiana has been identified by the CDC as a jurisdiction with elevated incidence of HIV or AIDS. After consultation with the Office of Public Health, Louisiana Medicaid recommends one-time screening of all enrolled persons 15 or older, unless the patient declines. This population represents approximately 696,060 persons of which only 46,539 (6.7%) had a routine screening

in SFY 2013. Screening the remaining population would result in approximately \$6.8 million in laboratory claims.

There are no nationally accepted quality measures that we have found for HIV screening in the general population based on claims data with specific technical specifications. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends screening for HIV infection in adolescents and adults aged 15-65 years. Louisiana Medicaid is open to writing technical specifications to HIV screening to implement in its Bayou Health quality management program. We are encouraged by past actions by the Legislature to make HIV screening and consent a part of routine medical care.

Louisiana Medicaid recognizes the importance of early screening, detection, and treatment of these diseases. As such, we strongly support routine HIV screening for Bayou Health members likely to be at high risk for HIV. Additionally, it is of utmost importance to continue seeing improvements to our Birth Outcomes Initiative that pregnant women be tested for syphilis and HIV as early as possible during each pregnancy. A second HIV test during the third trimester, preferably before 36 weeks of gestation, is a cost-effective measure in areas of high HIV prevalence like Louisiana.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. I am happy to meet with you any time to discuss these issues and other initiatives aimed at reducing health disparities in our State.

Sincerely,



J. Ruth Kennedy
Medicaid Director

JRK/jwh

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Health and Welfare Committee
David R. Poynter, Legislative Research Library