

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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CONTACT: David Dearborn, 860-424-5024
David.dearborn@ct.gov

State OKs Separate Enrollment of Doctors, Hospitals In HUSKY Program; Charter Oak Also Enrolling

*Governor Expresses State's Commitment to Landmark Charter Oak Program;
Now Serving 2,300 Previously Uninsured Residents, with 1,450 More Soon to Enroll*

HARTFORD—State Social Services Commissioner Michael P. Starkowski today began implementing a directive by Governor M. Jodi Rell to allow state-contracted health plans to enroll doctors, hospitals and other medical providers in the HUSKY program without the requirement that they enroll with the new Charter Oak Health Plan for uninsured adults. The state-contracted health plans will still administer both the Charter Oak and HUSKY programs.

The state's action is expected to accelerate the growth of medical provider networks in two of the three newly-contracted managed care organizations.

Governor Rell reaffirmed the state's commitment to the landmark Charter Oak Health Plan, which continues to grow as a pragmatic alternative for residents who would otherwise be without access to affordable health care, including those with pre-existing medical conditions.

In taking action today, Governor Rell and Commissioner Starkowski acknowledged the concerns of legislators in working together to protect the continuity of health care services to children and families.

“While provider networks have grown from 5,680 to over 9,500 over the past five months, two of the new health plans – Aetna Better Health and AmeriChoice by United Healthcare – do not have adequate capacity for major additions of HUSKY beneficiaries,” Governor Rell said. “This has affected the pace of transition of beneficiaries into the new health plans overall.”

One of the newly-contracted health plans -- Community Health Network of Connecticut -- already has a robust provider network by virtue of its longstanding involvement in the HUSKY program.

The move to end the requirement that managed care organizations recruit doctors, hospitals and other health care providers as a package deal – that is, require joint enrollment in both the HUSKY and Charter Oak programs – is expected to lead to more rapid growth of the HUSKY provider networks. Some hospitals and doctors have been slow to join the new networks because of the state’s requirement that they join both HUSKY and Charter Oak. The new policy means that:

- A health plan can enroll a medical provider in HUSKY without the requirement that it enroll same provider in Charter Oak, or vice versa.
- The health plans are still required, under their contracts, to enroll an adequate number of providers in their HUSKY and Charter Oak networks. This is because the health plans are contracted to administer benefits and customer service in both programs. However, the health plans have the freedom to seek enrollment of a specific provider in either HUSKY or Charter Oak, or both. Correspondingly, providers can elect to join HUSKY, Charter Oak, or both.

The change is intended to facilitate the transition of the remaining 154,000 HUSKY members from Anthem BlueCare Family Plan and 39,000 from Medicaid fee-for-service into the newly-contracted health plans.

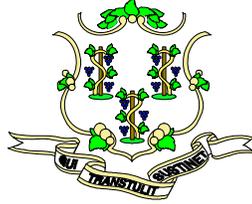
DSS is also implementing Governor Rell’s direction to negotiate a one-month extension of the state’s contract with Anthem Health Plans Inc. to remain in the HUSKY program past December 31. Anthem’s representative at today’s Medicaid Managed Care Council meeting expressed the company’s willingness to stay in the program as a non-managed care, administrative-services plan.

To date, over 42,800 HUSKY members have voluntarily joined the newly-contracted health plans. Enrollment in Community Health Network of Connecticut has topped 100,000.

In late October, Governor Rell directed DSS to activate contingency plans to extend the transition deadline to February 1, 2009, depending on network adequacy. The gradual return to a full managed care environment in the HUSKY program reflects state public policy since 1995. Connecticut is one of 47 states employing a managed care program for public health beneficiaries. The hiatus in Connecticut was due to the Rell administration’s enforcement of contracting transparency principles and full adherence to Freedom of Information Act standards.

The Charter Oak Health Plan, offering credible health care benefits at affordable cost for uninsured adults 19 through 64, continues to enroll Connecticut residents. More than 2,300 citizens are enrolled with Charter Oak health plans, with another 1,450 eligible to enroll after being determined eligible for the program.

“Charter Oak continues to be the most exciting and significant development in public health coverage in Connecticut since the HUSKY program began a decade ago,” Starkowski said.



Governor Rell underscored the importance of Charter Oak to Connecticut's uninsured adults, noting that it is a landmark plan sure to be emulated as a role model in discussions in other states because of its combination of affordable individual cost-sharing with reasonable public subsidy.

Medical provider rates have never been higher for the HUSKY program, with \$74.6 million in increased state reimbursements. The state raised the "floor" on Medicaid rates, which provides a starting point for negotiations on both HUSKY and Charter Oak. Public health managed care works much like commercial managed care, with providers negotiating individual rates. The fact that Connecticut has raised the negotiating start point through increased appropriations for provider rates means higher rates for doctors than were previously available.

The increase in doctor payment rates was appropriated for the two-year budget period ending June 30, 2009. While this unprecedented increase also covers doctors participating in non-HUSKY Medicaid and State-Administered General Assistance, increased rates are available to the thousands of providers already enrolled, and those considering enrolling, with the HUSKY managed care organizations.

Physicians can get more information about enrolling in the provider networks by calling the provider relations departments in HUSKY health plans: Aetna Better Health at 1-866-742-3120; AmeriChoice by United Healthcare at 1-866-573-2451; and Community Health Network of Connecticut at 1-800-440-5071.

Parents can get more information about HUSKY at www.huskyhealth.com or 1-877-CT-HUSKY. Uninsured adults can get more information about the Charter Oak Health Plan at www.charteroakhealthplan.com or 1-877-77CTOAK.

