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Human Services Department Increases Medicaid Dental Provider Rates

Rate Increase and Other Improvements to Encourage More Dental Participation in the Medicaid Program

Santa Fe, New Mexico – The New Mexico Human Services Department has increased Medicaid dental provider rates by ten percent, the first increase since 1999. "This is something that had to be done for the dentists who are providing excellent dental care to thousands of New Mexico children and adults," said Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department Secretary. "The increase is also intended to encourage more dentists to serve the lower-income clients participating in the Medicaid program."

The provider fee increase is retroactive to July 1, 2007, and is one of many improvements to the Medicaid Dental Program over the past year. A new a web portal has also been implemented to help providers access the status of a client's eligibility as well as the status of payment. Dental providers can also take advantage of electronic billings. "These improvements can help reduce paperwork, increase timely payments and make it easier for providers to participate in the Medicaid program," said Carolyn Ingram, New Mexico Medicaid Director.

The American Dental Association recommends that children see a dentist for the first time no later than their first birthdays. However, studies reveal that only three out of five children do so by the time they enter kindergarten. "Regular dental check-ups are instrumental in a child's well-being that is why it is so critical we increase the number of dentists who see Medicaid clients," said Ingram.

Of the nearly 900 licensed dental care providers in New Mexico, 513 participate in the Medicaid Dental Program through the SALUD! Managed Care Program. Together they provide dental care to about 209,000 children and 53,000 adults. New Mexico Medicaid does provide a comprehensive dental benefit for most Medicaid recipients, which includes diagnostic, preventative, restorative, oral surgery services and orthodontia for children.

"Not all dentists in New Mexico opt to provide dental services for people receiving health care services through Medicaid," said Patricio Larragoite, DDS, and the state's Medicaid Dental Director. "We believe that a ten percent across-the-board dental fee increase will interest more dentists in our program by making us more competitive with what private insurance companies pay them for dental services."

Dental providers interested in participating in the Medical Dental Program are asked to contact the Human Services Department, Medical Assistance Division at 1-888-997-2583.

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