



Department of
Human Resources

311 West Saratoga Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

Report dated September 15, 2011

**Report on Long-Term Care Eligibility
Determinations**

Prepared for:

Joint Chairmen, Senate Budget & Taxation and
House Appropriations Committees, Senate
Finance and House Health and Government
Operations Committees

As required by:

Page 77 of the 2011 Joint Chairmen's Report



September 15, 2011

The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Edward J. Kasemeyer
Chairman
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairmen Middleton and Kasemeyer:

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and the Department of Human Resources (DHR) continue to be committed to improving the eligibility process for applicants applying for long term care services. As required by the 2011 Joint Chairmen's Report (pages 76-77), we are respectfully submitting the following interim report on our progress to streamline the process for long term care eligibility determinations.

As we noted in our last report on August 15, changes in the application and eligibility process have begun to pay dividends. In all, the average number of days to process an application for long term care benefits has decreased by 32 percent since May of this year in our Bureau of Long Term Care Eligibility (which processes cases for most of the large counties in the state) and by 27 percent statewide. This translates to an average of 68 days to process in August in the Bureau and 55 days statewide.

While we still have more to do to meet the federal standard of 45 days, we are moving in the right direction. We are optimistic that further refinements in our operational processes and policies will complement those described below that we have already implemented.

1. Initiating or Pending all Annual Redeterminations

Beginning March 21, we made a statewide change in policy so that all redeterminations are initiated or "pended" shortly after receipt of the paperwork. Once pended, benefits will continue to be paid for recipients while the

redetermination process is ongoing and will help alleviate some of the cash flow concerns associated with a delay in the final determination of eligibility.

Through this change in policy, the number of redeterminations that have been pending or initiated has grown to approximately 800 per month – an increase of 49 percent from February levels before the policy change was implemented. These additional redeterminations mean that cash flow for providers has increased by approximately \$1.8 million per month.

2. Implementing New Technology

In our last update, we described our efforts to use our new technology to sort through or “triage” our existing caseload. This technology is used by other states to expedite assessing the risk of an application and speed the processing of cases, particularly cases identified as low risk cases. Using third party databases and information provided by the applicant, the software quickly verifies income, assets and other factors to determine the likelihood that a case is eligible. This will ultimately allow caseworkers to more quickly determine low risk cases and approve them and immediately identify the problems with high risk cases and more quickly request the information required to determine eligibility.

3. Streamlining Policy Concerning the 60-month Look-Back Period

In consultation with community stakeholders, we have made significant progress in making policy changes that will streamline the eligibility process, while continuing to comply with the required five-year “look-back” of applicants’ financial histories. We met the objective of developing a new procedure for the look-back period to streamline the documentation process while maintaining program integrity and minimizing financial risk to the State by May 2, 2011.

The new look-back period process was implemented by the release of an Action Transmittal to eligibility case workers. Also in May, we developed training materials and trained staff in the Bureau of Long Term Care Eligibility on the new look-back procedures.

DHR and DHMH will evaluate the effectiveness of the look-back procedures by monitoring application timeliness compliance rates monthly and at interim checkpoints throughout the year to ensure that the process is helpful for applicants, workers and providers.

4. Simplified Applications per new Policies and Procedures

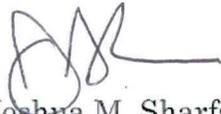
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The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton and Edward J. Kasemeyer
September 15, 2011
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of an Action Transmittal to eligibility case workers. The applications are currently available online and can be downloaded and completed. The fill-able applications were made available for testing on September 1, 2011 to staff, advocates and providers. We are in the process of making the recommended format changes and anticipate that the fill-able applications will be available online effective no later than September 30, 2011. We conducted four trainings for staff, advocates, nursing facilities and providers throughout the state for both the look-back process and the new applications on August 23 and August 25, 2011. Two trainings originally scheduled for August 29 have been rescheduled to October 3, 2011 due to Hurricane Irene and related flooding. Additionally, we continue to prepare a methodology, to be put in place by December 1, 2011, to evaluate the modified application and redetermination process.

Thank you for your continued support of our efforts to improve service delivery in this critical program area. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or need further information.

Sincerely,



Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D.
Secretary
Department of Health and
Mental Hygiene



Theodore Dallas
Secretary
Department of Human Resources

c: Rosemary Malone, DHR
Debbie Ruppert, DHMH
Tammy Bresnahan, DHR
Marie Grant, DHMH



September 15, 2011

The Honorable Norman H. Conway
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
Room 121, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401 – 1912

Dear Chairman Conway:

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Through this change in policy, the number of redeterminations that have been pended or initiated has grown to approximately 800 per month – an increase of 49

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September 15, 2011

The Honorable Peter A. Hammen
Chairman
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401 - 1912

Dear Chairman Hammen:

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