

# Operations Memorandum - Medical Assistance

## OPS110704

July 12, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Expediting Medical Assistance (MA) Eligibility Determinations for Drug and Alcohol Treatment Applicants  
**TO:** Executive Directors  
**FROM:** Lourdes Padilla , Acting Director, Bureau of Operations

### Purpose

To provide guidance to County Assistance Offices (CAOs) to expedite a determination for Medical Assistance (MA) eligibility for drug and alcohol treatment applicants.

### Background/Discussion

Single County Authorities (SCAs) are responsible for case management services for people requiring drug and alcohol treatment. Because of cost-containment measures, the SCAs need to know as soon as possible whether their clients qualify for MA, or if funding is needed from another source. The clients are at risk of going without treatment if funding is not available.

Act 152 of 1988 provided state funding for drug and alcohol non-hospital residential detoxification, rehabilitation treatment and halfway house services for people who qualified for MA under fee-for-service who were not yet enrolled in the HealthChoices (HC) Medicaid Behavioral Health plan. Beginning July 1, 2011, Act 152 funds will be transferred to the HC Medicaid Behavioral Health plan. It will become increasingly important for the CAOs to expedite MA applications for people needing drug and alcohol treatment services so that enrollment into a HC plan will not be delayed.

Although the CAO has 30 days to make an eligibility decision, a decision can be made sooner if all supporting documentation has been received for a drug and alcohol treatment application. If verification documents are still needed, the caseworker should encourage the applicant to provide the information as quickly as possible. It is the person's responsibility to provide the information; however, caseworkers can assist the applicant, if needed. CAOs are encouraged to expedite applications for drug and alcohol treatment patients applying for the MA benefits only (not cash or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). The CAO should abide by the following policy and procedures:

- Persons participating in an approved drug and alcohol treatment program must provide a completed Drug and Alcohol Treatment Form ([PA 1672](#)). The treatment center will indicate the date the person was enrolled and

the expected length of treatment. MA cannot be authorized until this form is returned to the CAO.

- Drug and alcohol treatment must preclude employment, and MA benefits under this program are limited to nine months in a person's lifetime. Efforts should be made to ensure MA coverage is closed once active drug and alcohol treatment services are no longer needed.
- Since drug and alcohol treatment coverage is time-limited, disability and health sustaining medication forms should be completed so these categories can be explored prior to utilizing the drug and alcohol treatment category.

For more information on the drug and alcohol treatment program under MA, please refer to the [Medical Assistance Eligibility Handbook 305.54](#).

### **Next Steps**

1. Share and review this information with appropriate staff members.
2. Contact your Area Manager if you have any questions.
3. This Operations Memorandum will remain in effect until the information is updated in the Medical Assistance Eligibility Handbook