

From: concerned staff <concernedtexans@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, July 25, 2023 7:59 PM

To: cecile.young@hhs.texas.gov

Subject: We Need Your Help, Texans Need Your Help!

Dear Commissioner Young,

As concerned citizens and dedicated employees of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, we feel it is our responsibility to bring several critical matters to your attention regarding the current operations within the organization. These issues are escalating rapidly, and the agency is facing significant risks, including the potential termination of Medicaid coverage for countless individuals and the potential loss of billions of dollars in federal funding earmarked to support Medicaid coverage throughout the public health emergency.

In April 2023, we received official notification from agency leadership that they were initiating a rollback of all policies previously implemented as directed by CMS in March 2020. Subsequently, we were informed to prepare for a substantial increase in workload and mandatory overtime. Within a tight eight-month timeframe, we were tasked with processing close to 6 million Medicaid recipients. Approximately two weeks after the process began, we started receiving numerous emails from agency leadership indicating that thousands of individuals had been erroneously denied coverage. Consequently, we were burdened with the manual correction of these coverage issues. Despite multiple inquiries, the reasons for these denials were not adequately explained by agency leadership. We participated in daily meetings with Ms. Molly Lester, Deputy to the Chief Program and Services Officer, Michelle Alletto, and staff from the Chief Information Officer responsible for our IT department. Ms. Lester was apprised of these issues daily. There are still outstanding decisions and unresolved issues that are causing coverage gaps that were brought to her attention several months ago.

As a result of the initial process we ran in April, we were informed that approximately 80,000 individuals lost coverage erroneously, including several thousand pregnant women who required critical services during their pregnancies or essential post-pregnancy care coverage. Additionally, we received subsequent emails from agency leadership indicating that several thousand elderly individuals were slated to lose medical coverage, which previously paid a portion of their Medicare Part B expenses. The concerning part was that many of these individuals did not receive any notice of denial, leaving them unaware of their coverage termination until their social benefits were reduced to cover the premium payments. We were told this was being worked on.

Further compounding the issues, individuals under the breast and cervical cancer program were also denied coverage without any satisfactory response from Ms. Lester or Ms. Alletto. The lack of timely resolution and effective communication from agency leadership has been disheartening and unacceptable. Recently, we were informed that the system was about to initiate a second round of cases for review, and we fear that the problems experienced during the first round in April may recur, leaving thousands of

individuals without coverage and placing a heavy burden on our team to resolve the issues manually. How many more thousands will lose coverage?

Former agency leadership emphasized the necessity of compliance with all CMS requirements to retain the crucial billions of dollars in federal funding. However, due to the current system issues and lack of communication, we are concerned that failure to meet these requirements could result in mass layoffs of staff, who are already struggling to maintain their employment. This will lead to an increase in food insecurity across the state as our teams will become overwhelmed and unable to keep up with new applications for individuals applying for food assistance.

The recent leadership transition has only added to the challenges we face. The interim leadership, particularly Ms. Lester, appears ill-equipped to provide valuable insight or guidance. There are widespread concerns about Ms. Alletto's involvement and dedication, as she is often seen spending excessive time on her phone, watching her pets on her home webcam, and frequently seems confused and forgetful during meetings.

The situation has taken a toll on our well-being, and we are desperately seeking help and support to address these pressing issues. Please, help us bring stability and efficiency back to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission so that we can better serve the individuals relying on Medicaid coverage and fulfill our crucial mission as an agency.

Based on the meetings many of us who speak as one voice in this communication have attended, it has become evident that we are currently not in compliance with the CMS regulations. Last month, former agency leadership assigned us the crucial task of documenting all outstanding issues, with the intention of presenting them to executive leadership. Upon reviewing the list, some of us were alarmed by its extensive nature. It has become evident that urgent action is necessary to address the lack of IT resources, which is having a significant toll on innocent citizens and the remaining workforce tasked with resolving these issues. The state of non-compliance with CMS regulations is a matter of great concern and requires immediate attention. Our inability to meet these regulatory standards puts the agency at risk of losing critical federal funding and jeopardizes the well-being of the countless individuals relying on Medicaid coverage. It is imperative that we take swift action to rectify these issues and ensure full compliance with CMS requirements.

The documentation of outstanding issues provides a clear and compelling case for executive leadership to prioritize and allocate adequate resources to address the IT shortcomings. The lack of sufficient IT resources has resulted in numerous citizens being denied vital healthcare coverage and has placed an enormous burden on our dedicated workforce. The workload has become overwhelming, leading to additional stress and strain on our already hardworking team. The consequences of these unresolved issues are far-reaching, affecting not only the citizens dependent on Medicaid but also the dedicated staff striving to provide essential services. We must act

promptly to remedy this situation and alleviate the suffering and uncertainty experienced by those who rely on our services.

It is evident from the meetings we have attended that we are not in compliance with CMS regulations, and urgent action is required. The comprehensive list of outstanding issues underscores the pressing need for increased IT resources to address these issues promptly and efficiently. We implore executive leadership to recognize the critical nature of the situation and support us in resolving these challenges to ensure the continued well-being of our citizens and the stability of our agency.

In addition, while it has been a long-standing and known practice for the Chief Program and Services Office to filter and passively overlook key information and data from stakeholders, we strongly urge the agency to prioritize transparency. In doing so, we can build stronger connections with these stakeholders, who may possess valuable insights and perspectives that could be instrumental in finding solutions and intervening in critical situations.

Our current situation within the Texas Health and Human Services Commission demands urgent leadership and guidance. Compliance with CMS regulations is lacking, leading to the potential loss of crucial federal funding and Medicaid coverage for countless individuals. To address the extensive list of outstanding issues and leverage the revised CMS guidance, immediate action from agency leadership is essential to ensure the well-being of both citizens and the dedicated workforce.

We urge you to initiate an open dialogue with some of us, specifically at the 909 W 45th Street location. We are willing to speak anonymously due to fears of potential retaliation, as we have witnessed the repercussions faced by those who have previously spoken out against Ms. Alletto and her leadership team. Who will help us as we seek to help our fellow Texans?

Sincerely,

Concerned Texans and Dedicated Employees