

State Medicaid Managed Care Advisory Committee



Children and Youth with Medical, Behavioral, and
Developmental Complexity Subcommittee
February 8, 2024

Summary:

The committee convened for its first meeting to address critical aspects of care for children in the MDCP STAR Kids program. Key actions included the election of leadership roles, designation of subject matter experts (SMEs) from among MDCP parents, and discussions on several pivotal topics:

- Streamlining the STAR Kids Screening and Assessment Instrument (SK-SAI) for enhanced usability.
- Transitioning the responsibility for MDCP eligibility determinations to HHSC by Spring 2024, as mandated by CMS.
- Examining the transition protocol for kids aging out of STAR Kids and transitioning to STAR+PLUS.

Main Points:

- The committee advocated for increased adaptability in the SK-SAI application process to better meet the diverse needs of beneficiaries.
- HHSC is set to assume the role of conducting MDCP eligibility determinations, a shift prompted by CMS to ensure direct oversight.
- Significant concerns were voiced regarding the efficacy of the current process for transitioning beneficiaries from STAR Kids to STAR+PLUS, highlighting areas for improvement.

[Subcommittee Agenda](#)

Meeting Logistics

This first meeting established the committee's structure, electing Alfonso Velarde as chair and Ramsey Long Boom as vice chair. Elizabeth Tucker and Terri Carriker, both mothers of children in the MDCP STAR Kids program, were appointed as SMEs to share their experiences. Dr. Gore, one of HHSC's Medical Directors, is also assisting the committee as an SME.

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Overview of STAR Kids Screening and Assessment Instrument (SK-SAI)

Presented by Heather Kuhlman, STAR Kids Team Lead, Medicaid and CHIP Services, HHSC:

Kuhlman introduced the SK-SAI, emphasizing its role in the STAR Kids managed care model. The SK-SAI aims to help MCOs understand a member's service needs, identify unmet needs and barriers to care, and aid in developing individual service plans.

Presentation

Purpose of the SK-SAI:

- Understand member service needs.
- Identify unmet needs and barriers to care.
- Assist in developing individual service plans.

Administration:

- Conducted by nurses, either employed or subcontracted by MCOs.
- MCOs cannot alter SK-SAI content, including question order and algorithms.

SK-SAI Streamlining Project:

Directed by SB 1207, the project aims to reduce the assessment burden, improve training consistency, and streamline the reassessment process for children without significant functional changes. Implemented on Sept. 1, 2022.

Questions and Answers:

- Elizabeth Tucker raised concerns about the need for flexibility in who conducts the SK-SAI, suggesting social workers for children needing behavioral supports.
 - Heather Federico acknowledged the suggestion and agreed to explore it further.
- During the discussion, the possibility of conducting assessments via telehealth audio instead of in-person evaluations as part of the SK-SAI administration process was brought up. Jacob raised concerns about the time taken for completion despite streamlining efforts, indicating it still takes up to three to four hours per assessment.
 - Heather Federico acknowledged this concern and mentioned that while there are no current projects initiated specifically for revising the SK-SAI to incorporate telehealth assessments more effectively, stakeholder feedback, such as this, will be considered in future tool revisions.

Medically Dependent Children Program (MDCP) Functional Eligibility Determinations

Presented by Lisa B. Glenn, MD, Office of the Medical Director, HHSC:

Glenn discussed the transition of functional eligibility determinations from TMHP to HHSC, as directed by CMS, with implementation expected in Spring 2024. HHSC is hiring clinical staff for these determinations and collaborating with TMHP on the transition.

[Presentation](#)

Questions and Answers:

- Elizabeth Tucker inquired about CMS's rationale for the change and expressed concerns about potential impacts on eligibility.
 - Dr. Glenn noted the need for HHSC oversight and acknowledged the importance of accurate training for determinations.

Transition from STAR Kids to STAR+PLUS

The subcommittee discussed the complexities of transitioning youth from the STAR Kids program to STAR+PLUS, focusing on ensuring a seamless shift for members as they age out of STAR Kids. This transition is critical for maintaining continuity of care for youth with medical, behavioral, and developmental complexities.

[Presentation](#)

STAR Kids & STAR+PLUS MCO Responsibilities:

- **Transition Planning:** Begins when a member turns 15, with STAR Kids MCOs responsible for initiating and overseeing the process. This early start is crucial for identifying future needs and preparing members and their families for the changes ahead.
- **Collaborative Planning:** Involves a transition specialist and MCO service coordinator from STAR Kids, emphasizing the importance of information sharing between STAR Kids and STAR+PLUS MCOs to ensure all needs are met.
- **Preparation for Transition:** STAR Kids transition specialists and MCO service coordinators play a vital role in preparing the member for a successful transition. This includes finding an adult Primary Care Provider (PCP), assessing needs for additional assistance and mental health management as necessary, and addressing housing requirements.
- **Ongoing Support:** MCOs are tasked with following up with the member every 90 days during the transition period to confirm they're taking the necessary steps and offer further assistance as needed.

Key Transition Milestones:

- **Six Months Out:** Discussions around STAR+PLUS enrollment packet and logistics take place, providing members and families with the information needed to make informed decisions about their care and coverage.

Changes at Age 21:

- **Eligibility Shifts:** The last day of the 21st birth month marks the end of STAR Kids eligibility. The following day, individuals transition to services for adults, primarily through STAR+PLUS.
- **Service Termination:** Certain services, including the Medically Dependent Children Program (MDCP), Private Duty Nursing (PDN), and Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care Center (PPECC) services, conclude at age 21.

Feedback and Commentary:

- Terri Carriker shared her personal experience with the transition process, highlighting significant challenges in navigating the system, such as issues with network adequacy, difficulty in choosing new MCOs and providers, and the scramble for durable medical equipment (DME) and specialists. Carriker's insights underscore the gap between policy and practice, stressing the need for improvements to support families better.
- Elizabeth Tucker and Mariah Ramon echoed these concerns, advocating for enhanced transition planning, better information sharing, and more collaborative efforts between MCOs to facilitate smoother transitions for members and their families.

Questions and Answers:

- Terri Carriker and Elizabeth Tucker raised concerns about the practical difficulties encountered during the transition, from selecting new MCOs and providers to accessing necessary services. The discussion highlighted the need for clearer communication, better coordination, and more accessible information about network adequacy.
- Heather Federico responded to concerns by affirming that transition planning should indeed start 12 months before the 21st birthday, acknowledging the need for greater collaboration between sending and receiving MCOs to ensure a smoother transition for members.

Non-MDCP - Transition Activities Prior To The 21st Birth Month

12 Months	The STAR Kids MCO will provide an overview of the STAR+PLUS program during a face-to-face visit with the member.
60 Days	<p>HHSC's enrollment broker will send the member an enrollment packet. The member will have 45-60 days to choose an MCO, or one will be selected for them.</p> <p>Once the member is enrolled with the STAR+PLUS MCO, the STAR+PLUS MCO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• schedule and conduct the initial assessment,• develop an appropriate individual service plan,• retain the service plan in the member's case file, and• connect member to needed services.

MDCP - Transition Activities Prior To The 21st Birth Month (cont'd)

6 Months	If no MCO has been selected, the PSU will call the member to discuss the enrollment packet and timeframe to choose an MCO.
Last 5 Months	<p>The PSU will notify the member of the MCO selection if one has not been selected.</p> <p>The STAR+PLUS MCO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• schedule and conduct the initial assessment,• develop an individual service plan (ISP) within the STAR+PLUS HCBS program cost limit, and• send the ISP to PSU for processing. <p>Once PSU verifies eligibility, the STAR+PLUS MCO will connect the member to needed services.</p>
