



**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

2001 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2001

Tel 919-733-4534 • Fax 919-715-4645

Michael F. Easley, Governor

Dempsey Benton, Secretary

December 5, 2007

The Honorable Verla Insko, Co-Chairman  
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Mental Health,  
Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 307-B1 Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

Dear Representative Insko:

Section 10.49(k) of S.L. 2007-323 (House Bill 1473), under the topic of "Additional Housing Assistance," requires the Department of Health and Human Services to complete the development of a Medicaid Uniform Screening Tool to determine the mental health of individuals admitted to long-term care facilities by January 1, 2008 and to submit a status report on related activities to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (MH/DD/SAS).

The Division of Medical Assistance (DMA) has been in the process of developing a uniform screening tool for eight of North Carolina's long-term care programs that will initially use the tool, including nursing facilities, adult care homes, private duty nursing (PDN), personal care services (PCS), enhanced personal care services (PCS-Plus), and our community alternatives programs for disabled adults (CAP/DA), children (CAP/C), and consumer directed care (CAP/Choice).

The contract for development and implementation of the Medicaid Uniform Screening Tool (MUST) was awarded in August 2006 to Electronic Data Systems (EDS); however, the project is currently still in the development and testing stage. The MUST will replace the FL2, the FL2e, the PASARR Level I screen, telephone prior approvals for skilled nursing facility level of care and several other processes used to "screen" applicants to document their medical, functional and behavioral health status.

The development of the MUST has been significantly delayed due to North Carolina's requirements for the information technology security and architecture components of the Office of Information Technology Services (ITS), implemented by the Division of Information Resource Management (DIRM). The referral decisions rendered by this tool must be very accurate which requires significant testing before release to the provider community. The tool will require a reliable accuracy rate for proper referral into

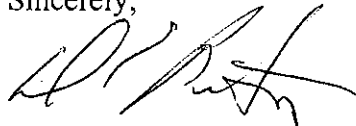


one of the eight long-term care programs included with the MUST. Therefore, the tool still requires calibration for accurate decisions. As a result of the additional technology requirements, the need for intensive field testing, and the feedback received from the Uniform Screening Task Group, a revised timeline has been established. The phase-in period for implementing the Medicaid Uniform Screening Tool is scheduled to begin in May, 2008, with mandatory implementation by all providers by September, 2008.

As part of the current development and testing phases, the MUST includes the components of the PASARR, Level I federal requirements to screen for mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse services. Financial resources will need to be secured to develop and test any additional mental health, developmental disabilities or substance abuse screening components not included in the PASARR screens to address the intent of Section 10.49(k) of S.L. 2007-323. The legislation requires the development of the MUST to determine the mental health of any individual admitted to any long-term care facility. Development of the tool for this purpose is beyond the original scope of the project and cannot be completed by January 1, 2008. Once financial resources are secured, a minimum of 12 to 15 months will be required to obtain ITS approval, modify the software, field test the changes and implement the revised software.

Please direct all questions concerning this status report to Tara Larson, Acting Deputy Director for Clinical Policy and Programs at (919) 855-4260.

Sincerely,



Dempsey Benton

DB:tl

cc: Dan Stewart  
William W. Lawrence, Jr., MD  
Michael Moseley  
Sharnese Ransome  
Jennifer Hoffmann  
Lynn Muchmore  
Legislative Library (2)



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Michael F. Easley, Governor

Dempsey Benton, Secretary

December 5, 2007

The Honorable Martin L. Nesbitt, Jr., Co-Chairman  
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Mental Health,  
Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Room 300B Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603

Dear Senator Nesbitt:

Section 10.49(k) of S.L. 2007-323 (House Bill 1473), under the topic of "Additional Housing Assistance," requires the Department of Health and Human Services to complete the development of a Medicaid Uniform Screening Tool to determine the mental health of individuals admitted to long-term care facilities by January 1, 2008 and to submit a status report on related activities to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (MH/DD/SAS).

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Please direct all questions concerning this status report to Tara Larson, Acting Deputy Director for Clinical Policy and Programs at (919) 855-4260.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dempsey Benton".

Dempsey Benton

DB:tl

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