Newborn Medicaid Card Delays

June 2016

In a January 2016 survey of practice managers of pediatric practices in NC by the NC Pediatric Society found that 76% of respondents reported delays of one month or more being “frequent.” Particular problems were noted in Carteret, Cumberland, Davidson, Forsyth, Haywood, Moore, Orange, Robeson and Wake Counties. In general, practice managers suggest these problems have been going on for about three years and have worsened in 2016. About half of all births in NC are to mothers who are eligible for Medicaid.

In January 2016, a practice in Scotland County reported more than $50,000 in services provided to newborns who did not yet have their Medicaid cards. Some of these babies were born in September 2015.

Since newborns without Medicaid cards are so common, a practice in Moore County has established office procedures to refer likely-eligible newborns without Medicaid cards to certain pharmacies which will be more likely to fill the prescription awaiting the card and eventual payment from Medicaid. (Many pharmacies in the area are unable to do this.)

A practice in Robeson County frequently sees two month olds without Medicaid cards. They work closely with dedicated DSS caseworkers who report being able to start entering in eligibility information, but the system will not let them complete it. They have had cases in which eligibility was entered in error for a future year and are unable to make the correction on the local level, causing further delays.

Practices in Lee and Burke Counties note spending increasing amounts of time spend talking parents through the process of getting their Medicaid cards plus working with DSS to resolve problems.

Since specialists may not see a newborn without a Medicaid card, a Catawba County practice has established a procedure for referring such babies to specialists in a "pending status of Medicaid" to increase the likelihood that the specialist will see the newborn.

A practice in Guilford reports frequent problems with parents not coming back after the initial or one-month visit when the family lacks a Medicaid card. One of these children tested positive for PKU and especially needed timely follow-up. It is not clear if the parent moved or felt they could not or felt they could not receive services without assurance of payment.

Since lack of Medicaid cards for newborns was such a frequent problem, one Wake County practice has established new policies specific to two-month olds with no Medicaid card received yet to manage payment issues.

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Jon Carr, lobbyist, NC Pediatric Society; jcarr@jordanprice.com; cell 919-270-2906
Elizabeth Hudgins, Executive Director, 919-839-1156 x104
1100 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh NC, 27604