Important changes coming to Nebraska Medicaid

A message from John Wendling, CEO, Magellan Healthcare in Nebraska

Anyone involved in healthcare over time can look backwards and see periods of significant change. As a community of individuals working in this system, our goal is always that those changes move the system forward and lead to opportunities for individuals to grow and succeed. Nebraska is entering one of these times of change and we have the opportunity to look for the potential development that is in front of us as a state.

Nebraska Medicaid and Long-Term Care has announced a plan to transition to a new system, called Heritage Health. One of the significant changes is the integration of behavioral health and physical health into one plan for members. Currently Medicaid managed care members have coverage from one of three Managed Care organizations for their physical healthcare, and they have coverage under Magellan for behavioral health services. Following the implementation of the integrated system, members will have one health plan that will cover all their physical health, behavioral health, and pharmacy care.

Integrated healthcare has the potential to benefit Medicaid members. At Magellan we have long advocated the coordination of care between physical health and behavioral health providers. Our stakeholders have seen this reflected in the treatment record review process, recovery care management, member education, and health integration services. It is our hope that an integrated healthcare delivery system can further develop this coordination for members and move forward a “total person” approach to healthcare.

A key step in this transition process was an RFP for integrated care health plans with a projected implementation of January 1, 2017. Magellan chose not to respond to the RFP and therefore will not be one of the plans administering integrated health. We are a specialty health plan, and have clear evidence that members with SPMI demonstrated improvement in their physical and emotional health while under our care. We take great pride in serving in this capacity and are hopeful the awarded health plans will continue to serve the Nebraska Medicaid recipients physical and emotional needs under the new system.
As individuals involved in the behavioral health system become aware of the upcoming changes, Magellan is being asked questions about what this will mean for providers and members. We cannot speak for Medicaid and do not have all of the answers our providers and stakeholders will need, but we do want to be as helpful and supportive as we all move through this transition together. We recommend that all individuals visit the Heritage Health Homepage on the DHHS website. Information is offered here and individuals can subscribe to the page for updates. We will do our best to share information that is made available to us, but the best sources of information will be directly from Medicaid and the new Heritage Health plans.

As we have said many times, serving Nebraska is not just our job, this is our home, and we live in communities across the state. Our goal has always been to serve our fellow Nebraskans to the best of our ability and help them move toward long-term recovery and wellness. This will remain our focus throughout this transition.