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New Study Shows Medicaid Beneficiaries Satisfied With Transportation Services

Nearly 90 percent of South Carolina Medicaid beneficiaries utilizing non-emergency transportation are satisfied with the service they receive, according to the results of a new study conducted by the University of South Carolina's Institute for Public Service and Policy Research.

More than half of the 767 survey respondents also said transportation services have improved since the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services hired two transportation management companies, LogistiCare and MTM, to coordinate non-emergency trips to medical appointments. Those surveyed represent a randomly selected statewide sample of Medicaid non-emergency transportation utilizers.

Highlights of the survey include:

- 88 percent of those surveyed said they were "very satisfied" (65 percent) or "somewhat satisfied" (23 percent) with transportation services.
- About 52 percent of those surveyed said service is better now than it was prior to the new system's implementation in May. Of those, 37 percent of those surveyed said service was "much better" than it was prior to the new management system; 15 percent said it was "somewhat better."
- Among those beneficiaries who utilize non-emergency transportation the most (20 or more times per month), about 93 percent said they were satisfied, including 79 percent reporting "very satisfied" and 14 percent reporting "somewhat satisfied."

DHHS Director Emma Forkner said the survey is a valuable tool in gauging how well the new transportation management system is providing assistance to those who need help getting to and from medical appointments.

"This is an important study because while we often hear from various interest groups, we don't often enough hear from the most valuable stakeholders—the Medicaid beneficiaries themselves," Forkner said. "The agency has said all along that improved service for riders was one of the primary reasons for changing to a more accountable system. This survey indicates we're on the right track."

About 56,000 Medicaid beneficiaries use non-emergency transportation services each year. The system, which cost \$44.8 million in the last fiscal year, serves Medicaid eligible beneficiaries who need rides to doctor's offices, dialysis centers, and hospitals. Since May, more than 1 million trips have been coordinated through LogistiCare and MTM.

Prior to the new system, DHHS managed more than 20 separate contracts with individual transportation providers, with local eligibility workers responsible for scheduling trips. The agency switched to the new transportation management system as a way to foster greater accountability among providers, control inflationary growth in the system and provide improved service to beneficiaries. As a result of the change, transportation hours have been expanded, vehicles undergo more rigorous inspections and wasteful and abusive billing practices have decreased.

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