



## **Office of Health Transformation's Focus on Medicaid a Great Opportunity to Improve How All Ohioans Get Care**

In Executive Order 2011-02K, Governor Kasich created the Office of Health Transformation and recognized that Ohio spends more on health care than other states but does not have better health outcomes to show for it. The Governor charged the new Office to address Medicaid spending, plan for the long-term administration of the Medicaid program, and to improve the overall health system. Because of the magnitude and reach of the Medicaid program, which currently serves more than 2.4 million Ohioans, positive changes to the Medicaid delivery system will benefit all Ohioans.

While the state cannot sustain the growth rate of the Medicaid program—which is now an estimated 30 percent of the state budget—Ohioans cannot keep up with the cost of their health care either. The opportunities referred to in the Governor's Executive Order to improve our delivery system, with a focus on primary and preventive care, will improve the health of all Ohioans while saving money for the state and for consumers.

Changes to the primary care system to focus on keeping people healthy rather than treating them when they are sick are long overdue. We do need a system that “coordinates care to improve quality of life and helps reduce chronic care costs, and enables seniors and people with disabilities to live with dignity in the setting they prefer.” This new focus will reduce costs while improving their health and the care they receive. In seeking this transformation, the Administration can take advantage of incentives in the Affordable Care Act that will provide Ohio with enhanced federal funds and technical assistance to make these changes and achieve these goals.

Ohio faces profound budget challenges in the near term and drastic cuts to Medicaid will be tempting. However, long-term savings will only be achieved by the transformative changes described in the Governor's Executive Order. These changes to the Medicaid program must focus on the long term and be seamless with other health care policy changes, such as the implementation of Ohio's health care Exchange. The Affordable Care Act requires states to maintain their Medicaid eligibility requirements for children, pregnant women, and adults with disabilities until the new Exchange is fully operational. Reducing Ohio's eligibility requirements would put federal matching dollars at risk as well as the health of too many vulnerable Ohioans.

With the new Office on Health Transformation, Ohio has the opportunity to achieve real cost-containment in the Medicaid program and for all Ohioans, improve health outcomes, and modernize Ohio's health care delivery system. And, with a vision for the long term viability of our health care system, this can be achieved without harmful short-term actions like cutting Medicaid eligibility or services.

We look forward to working with the Administration and the General Assembly to promote policy changes that will meet the needs of consumers and provide more coordinated, patient-centered care for those on Medicaid and for all Ohioans.

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February 10, 2011