

Summary

On April 24, 2002, Governor Ronnie Musgrove announced the formation of a panel of healthcare providers, patient advocates, and professionals involved in healthcare in the state. On May 9, 2002, the Governor's Healthcare Commission was established and created by executive order 856 in response to an opinion issued by the Attorney General affirming the authority of the Governor's Office to restructure the Medicaid program.

When Governor Musgrove gave the Healthcare Commission their charge, he praised the members for their commitment and willingness to share their knowledge and experience to improve healthcare in Mississippi. Healthcare is a top priority of Governor Musgrove and he believes solutions can be found that, even in tough economic times, will provide quality healthcare for the citizens of the State of Mississippi who depend on Medicaid for healthcare.

The Governor's Healthcare Commission proudly submits the recommendations contained in the enclosed report to Rica Lewis-Payton, Executive Director of the Division of Medicaid, Office of the Governor, with the help of many partners working together. The Commission would like to express appreciation to Dr. Art Cosby, Professor and Director of the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University, and the Bower Foundation, who have formed a partnership that focuses on health policy and health services issues. The Decision Support Lab (DSL) was developed at Mississippi State University to assist in developing informed planning and policy. Leisel Ritchie Coordinator, Decision Support Lab at Mississippi State University, facilitated the first meeting when the commission members were introduced to this state of the art equipment that was instrumental in the development of this report. NASA also joined the partnership by loaning their DSL at the first meeting of the Commission on May 30, 2002. The assistance of Barbara Marino of NASA was also key in the development of this report through the use of NASA's DSL

Members collected information between Commission meetings by phone, e-mail, and focus meetings with peers and interested parties across the state, gathering all the information possible in order to make informed, realistic, and specific recommendations. Focus meetings were led by members of the Commission in communities across the state to discuss services such as Optometry, Pharmacy, Hospice, Surgery, Social Issues, and consumer issues. The meetings were attended by hundreds of providers and interested parties in communities from one end of the state to the other. By working together, the attached report was developed by grassroots healthcare providers and interested parties

who see Mississippians who depend on Medicaid for healthcare on a daily basis. Governor Musgrove recognized that providers have vital knowledge about the needs of our most vulnerable citizens that no one else can share. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input about healthcare during these fiscally trying times.

Many hours of work and collaboration between many different health professionals and interested parties from all over the state, representing numerous health services, went into the development of the recommendations in the final report. The Commission members quickly recognized the complexity of the Medicaid program as discussions continued between members and staff from the Division of Medicaid at each of the meetings. Rica Lewis-Payton, Executive Director of the Division of Medicaid, attended each meeting and expressed the need and desire for the Governor's Healthcare Commission to continue meeting after the submission of this report to act as an advisory committee.

It is the hope of the Governor's Healthcare Commission that recommendations contained in this report help to solve some of the budgetary problems currently experienced by the Division of Medicaid and the State of Mississippi, without jeopardizing the quality of healthcare received by Mississippians who receive services from Medicaid.

We, the members of the Governor's Healthcare Commission, hereby submit this report to Governor Ronnie Musgrove.

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