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Federal moratorium on Personal Care Assistance applications lifted

State Division of Senior and Disabilities Services accepts new PCA submissions on Aug. 12

(Anchorage, AK) — The state Division of Senior and Disabilities Services will start processing applications for Personal Care Assistant (PCA) services at 8 a.m. next Wednesday, Aug. 12. The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) had the state stop taking new applications on June 26, giving the state a window to process late reassessments and improve administrative procedures for PCA services and the state's four Medicaid waiver programs.

Since then, the state and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have collaborated on a thorough review of how Alaska runs PCA services. As a result CMS has determined that the temporary moratorium would no longer be applied to these services.

"We're very glad to have reached this understanding, and we will actively work to connect these Alaskans with services as soon as possible," said Bill Hogan, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services.

The ongoing review brings an additional positive change to our Waiver programs: CMS clarified that individuals who had their waiver applications completed and accepted as of June 26 are actively enrolled in the program and are not affected by the moratorium. These are individuals who had been found to meet financial and care-need thresholds prior to June 26th.

"I congratulate the Department of Health and Social Services on its work with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and thank our federal partners for their assistance to reinstate PCA services as quickly as possible," Governor Sean Parnell said. "This significant development is a reflection of the diligence of department employees, who are committed to accepting constructive feedback and constantly improving services for Alaskans. I trust we will soon see the moratorium on Medicaid waiver program applications lifted as well."

The state is also examining ways to streamline PCA access to services. In the coming months, the division will propose a series of changes to make the PCA enrollment process faster and services more flexible.

(more)

“We are delighted with this progress, and look forward to a lifting of the moratorium in our Medicaid waiver programs for those individuals in emergency and high risk situations in the very near future,” said Division Director Rebecca Hilgendorf. “We appreciate the expertise and national perspective CMS brings to our joint effort to improve Alaska’s waiver and Personal Care Assistance service system.”

An overall corrective action plan is due to CMS by Sept. 3.

Providers and Medicaid recipients with questions may contact Angela Salerno at 1 (907) 465-4874, or angela.salerno@alaska.gov. For more details, see the division’s Web page on the CMS Review, <http://hss.state.ak.us/dsds/cmsreview>.

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CMS letter dated Aug. 6 attached

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