

ASSOCIATION OF STATE CORRECTIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

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July 7, 2006

Hon. Donald Sundquist, Chairman
Hon. Angus S. King, Jr., Vice Chairman
Medicaid Commission
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Chairman Sundquist and Vice Chairman King:

We are writing to urge the Medicaid Commission to seek to ensure access to Medicaid for eligible individuals who are released from prison and jail, which is a critical component in the safe and successful re-entry of this population into the community and the avoidance of hundreds of millions of dollars of emergency health, public safety, and correctional health services costs.

Millions of people with serious mental health, physical health, and substance abuse issues are admitted to US jails and prisons each year; corrections agencies spend nearly six billion dollars per year on health care for people who are incarcerated. That investment may be wasted, and additional costs incurred by community health systems, if people lose access to the services needed to stay in recovery upon release. When released individuals are not promptly enrolled in Medicaid, and their medical coverage is interrupted, they may face the worsening of chronic diseases and other medical outcomes associated with high rates of health care use. In general, gaps in Medicaid coverage can reduce the use of preventive services and increase the use of expensive inpatient and emergency room services.

In addition, without the continuity of care that Medicaid and other federal benefits can finance, the likelihood that people with serious health issues will resume the behavior that led to their incarceration and return to prison is increased. These individuals may stop taking medication, resume abusing drugs or alcohol, and violate conditions of release or commit new crimes. Those with mental illness are particularly likely to cycle in and out of jail and prison,

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with the vast majority jailed for minor, non-violent misdemeanors. According to a study conducted in Lucas County (OH), nearly three out of four people with mental illness released from jail are re-arrested within 36 months.

This pressing issue impacts families and communities across the nation. Congressional leaders are united in their strong efforts to ensure that people who will be released from prison and jail become productive members of the community, including through the Second Chance Act, which has strong bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. We believe that the Center for Medicaid Services can play an important role in these efforts by seeking ways to promote the prompt enrollment or reinstatement in Medicaid of vulnerable individuals re-entering the community after incarceration.

The Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) is a national organization representing the Directors of Corrections for the 50 States, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and four large City Jail systems. Members also include the Directors of the Correctional Service of Canada and the U.S. territories. The Association's major goals are to influence and shape correctional policy, to identify and serve as a clearinghouse to share with its members proven correctional practices, standards, and performance measures to ensure the furtherance of successful state-of-the-art activities; and to support its membership through a regimen of training and professional development programs designed to enhance member's professional skills and awareness on advancements in the profession.

We appreciate your attention and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Stalder', written in a cursive style.

Richard Stalder
Secretary, Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections
President, Association of State Correctional Administrators