



A Legacy of Caring since 1877

34 East Town Street
Norwich, Connecticut 06360-2326

telephone (860) 889-2375
fax (860) 889-3450
www.ucfs.org

Patricia Arnio, BSN, RN
Lead Nurse, Primary Care, United Community and Family Services, Inc.
47 Town Street; Norwich, CT 0636

7322
Legislative Testimony
House Bill ~~7792~~ and House Bill 1425
Committee on Human Services
March 15, 2007

To the members on the Committee on Human Services: My name is Patricia Arnio and I am the lead nurse of the Primary Care clinic at United Community and Family Services. UCFS is a community health center which provides, among many other services, primary care for adults and children in the greater Norwich area. I thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony in support of House Bills ~~7792~~ and 1425.

7322
I strongly support legislation that would improve the delivery of and accessibility to medical care for our clients who have Husky and other Medicaid plans. On a daily basis my staff and I encounter difficulties with our clients receiving the medications that they need. Often a medication will be denied at the pharmacy. Children are leaving pharmacies without medications including antibiotics, rescue asthma inhalers, and prednisone needed for severe asthma and other inflammatory reactions. When the medication coverage is rejected by the insurance company, there is no notification to the pharmacist that he/she can seek a one time over ride. The process for getting approval for the medication is time-consuming and labor intensive for our nursing staff and frequently a lengthy process, in some cases as long as a month before the child receives the appropriate medication.

Another area of concern is the difficulty in getting specialist appointments for our clients. Increasingly, since the inception of the Medicaid managed programs, there are fewer and fewer alternatives in the local area when our clients need specialty care as most local specialists have opted out of the Husky Medicaid plans. If a child on the east side of the river is in need of orthopedic services, they will not be seen by a local orthopedist unless they have been seen in the Emergency Room first. This results in our staff having to refer clients to the Emergency Room for care when there is a possibility of the need for orthopedic follow-up even if it seems that an ER visit is not necessary. Most children needing specialty care have to be referred to Connecticut Children's Medical Center or Yale Children's Hospital which in some cases is the appropriate venue for the child's care but not always. Considering that many of our clients have transportation difficulties, a referral to a facility so far from home becomes a barrier to receiving appropriate care. While the Medicaid insurance companies provide transportation, there are some cases where the arrangement of the transportation becomes an issue or patients are not delivered to their appointments on time and are not being seen by the specialists because they arrive at the specialist's office too late.

Testimony of Patricia Arnio

Page 2

In addition, when arranging for specialty appointments, and sending in the appropriate paperwork to the Medicaid HMO insurance plans, there are frequently long delays in the HMO's response to our request for a referral to a specialist even if they have approved the visit. Frequently the HMO may request more information before authorizing the visit and there is a delay in their request for the information or they don't request it at all until we call to find out what's happened with the referral request. All these delays result in clients waiting even longer for specialist appointments and in some cases not getting them at all.

Please consider passing House Bills ~~732~~⁷³²² and 1425. It would decrease the barriers to care that our clients and primary care facilities face on a daily basis by returning the medical management of the clients to the doctors and nurses who know them and care for them.