

Collaborative Forum Meeting Highlights Cost Allocation and Data Sharing Recommendations

On September 14, the Collaborative Forum held its monthly meeting at APHSA's office. Victoria Collins of the Office of Management and Budget's Office of Federal Financial Management reported on recent recommendations made by a work group on cost allocation reforms that was established as part of OMB's work under the presidential memorandum on flexibility. The President's February directive instructed agencies to report on ways to "reduce unnecessary regulatory and administrative burdens and redirect resources to services that are essential to achieving better outcomes at lower cost." The work group report, which has not yet been posted, recommended fundamental changes in four areas: (1) mechanisms for cooperative audit resolution; (2) mechanisms for pooling funds; (3) alternatives to time and effort reporting with a focus on outcomes; and (4) modification of cost allocation policy to encourage shared development of projects. Each recommendation carried detailed subcomponents.

The keynote speaker was Hilary Sohmer Dalin with the National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment at the National Council on Aging, who discussed data sharing among governmental agencies in light of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Privacy Act mandates. She provided successful examples from several states to illustrate how data sharing and online tools to verify eligibility can streamline and ease the process for both the applicant and the agency. These examples were for work with the aging and with disabled adults, but the solutions are not specific to these populations and can be applied to others applying for core services such as Medicare, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and TANF.

Mary Ellen Wiggins of OMB's Partnership Branch and other participants provided updates on projects that have been funded earlier this year or that are being examined now for possible funding. One of the funded projects, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) National Accuracy Clearing House, is in the advanced planning stages; Mississippi is the lead state. Updates were provided on another funded project, the CMS Improving Medicaid Provider Program Integrity through State Shared Services project.

More information about all projects and events is available at the Collaborative Forum web site at <http://collaborativeforumonline.com/>. [Bertha]