



**For Immediate Release
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WCCF: Changes Needed in Medicaid Documentation Requirements

Madison - The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) urged federal officials Friday to make changes in the new rules relating to the documentation of citizenship and identity for persons applying for and receiving Medicaid services. In a letter to the Center on Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Council said that the new rules create unnecessary hurdles that will deter eligible citizens from getting Medicaid services and will significantly increase administrative costs for the state and the counties.

“There are easier and more effective ways to document citizenship, while lowering costs to the state but still complying with the Congressional intent of the documentation requirements,” said Charity Eleson, executive director of WCCF.

“For example, the rule does not allow citizenship to be documented using state records showing Medicaid paid for a child’s birth in a Wisconsin hospital,” Eleson noted. “Considering that everyone born in the US is a citizen, the rules need to be more practical and allow common sense to prevail.”

The Council also asked CMS to allow states to accept copies of documents like passports and drivers licenses, rather than only original or certified copies. The Council’s letter said that although the federal intent is to permit Wisconsin and other states to continue their mail-in application process, “(I)t is totally unrealistic to think that applicants are going to mail in original copies of documents, such as their driver’s license, birth certificate or passport.”

Other recommendations made by the Council include:

- Exempting children in foster care and special needs adoption cases from documentation requirements, because their citizenship has already been verified in the child welfare system.
- Allowing Medicaid applicants a reasonable opportunity to obtain required documents.
- Accepting Native American tribal enrollment cards as appropriate documentation to serve as proof of identity and citizenship.
- Exempting participants in family planning programs.

The Council’s recommendations were submitted as part of the public comment period for the rules. The current regulations, known as “interim final” rules, were put into effect on July 1, 2006, prior to the period for public input.

The WCCF letter can be found on the Council’s website at:

http://www.wccf.org/pdf/CMSletter_interimregs3_080806.pdf

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