Importance of Health Services

Ohio’s Medicaid program, administered by ODJFS, provides health care coverage to individuals with a limited income. It is estimated that between 50 and 60% of DYS youth were eligible for Medicaid prior to their commitment to DYS. Youth involved in DYS often have extensive health needs, and Medicaid coverage is critical to allowing released youth to continue accessing medical and behavioral health services in their communities.

Restoring Medicaid Benefits

After years of planning and collaboration, the Department of Youth Services (DYS) entered into an Interagency Agreement with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) in December 2009 to suspend, rather than terminate, Medicaid benefits of eligible youth committed to DYS. Suspending Medicaid eligibility allows benefits to be restored quickly, from 24 to 72 hours after release, and provides youth with timely access to health services upon returning to their communities. This marks an historic public policy change and recognizes the importance of maintaining access to medical and behavioral health services through Medicaid. Promptly restoring Medicaid benefits supports a youth’s health and well-being at the critical time of re-entry.

Until recently, youth with Medicaid coverage had their benefits terminated upon entering a DYS facility. Following their release from an institution, youth who needed benefits had to apply for Medicaid reinstatement, which at times could be a lengthy process.

Ohio Benefit Bank

For those youth who were not eligible for Medicaid upon arrival to DYS, we will continue to partner with the Ohio Benefit Bank, a web-based computer program to connect low and moderate-income Ohioans with access to support and public benefits. DYS youth and their families, assisted by parole officers and Benefit Bank Counselors, can check potential eligibility for support benefits such as health care coverage, home energy assistance, child care subsidies, food stamps and tax credits at an Ohio Benefit Bank office, the mobile van or online.