

# The Special Needs Units Within the HealthChoices Program

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# HealthChoices Offers Help to Overcome Obstacles

- Member Services Department
- Special Needs Unit (SNU)
  - PH Plans
  - Department
  - Enrollment Assistance Program

# HealthChoices Program Design

- Inclusion of persons with special needs
- Created Special Needs Component
  - Enrollment Assistance Program (EAP) for enrollment and Managed Care Organization (Plan) changes
  - Each Physical Health - Managed Care Organization (PH-MCO)

# Special Needs Unit (SNU)

- Each physical health-managed care organization has a Special Needs Unit (SNU), stand alone or contained within their Integrated Care Management Unit
- Designated Special Needs Coordinators
- Experienced Special Needs Staff
- Registered Nurses or Social Worker MSW level

# Special Needs Unit (SNU)

- Each Physical Health Managed Care Organization (PH-MCO) has one
- Special Needs Unit Coordinator/Director
  - Has direct contact with the Medical Director at the PH-MCO
  - Qualifications include multiple years experience with Special Needs Populations

# Definition of a Special Need

- Non-categorical

Anyone who thinks they have a special need can be referred to the special needs unit

Examples of a special need:

- Short term
- HIV/AIDS
- Long term
- Brain Injury
- Intellectual Disability
- Social Issues
- Pregnant Women
- Behavioral Health Coordination

# Special Needs Units

- Assist Members:
  - To Navigate the Physical Health Managed Care Organization (PH-MCO)
  - To Access Timely & Effective Services, including assistance with Grievance, Appeal and Fair Hearing process as needed
  - With Care Coordination

# Coordination of Care

Advocate

PCP

Ancillary Providers

**Member  
SPECIAL NEEDS UNIT**

Community Agency

PA DHS Agencies



# SPECIAL NEEDS COORDINATION (Examples)

- **Behavioral Health MCOs**
- **Other Physical Health MCOs**
- **Medical Assistance Transportation Program**

# SPECIAL NEEDS COORDINATION (Examples)

- **Community Based Agencies**
- **Public Health Departments**
- **PA Government Agencies**
- **Home and Community Based Services Waivers**

# Special Needs Coordination (Internally within PH-MCO)

- **UM/QM**
- **Member Services**
- **Provider Relations, including training on SN with providers**
- **Pharmacy Services**
- **Disease Management**

# Special Needs Coordination (external)

- **DHS's Special Needs Staff**
- **Other PH-MCO Special Needs Units**
- **Other state, county and local agencies**
- **Waiver Providers**
- **Community Resources**

# Examples of SNU Activities

- **Home Visits**
- **Specialist as PCP Requests**
- **Individual Case “Interagency” Meetings including IEP development participation**

# ▶ Examples of SNU Activities Cont.

- **3-Way calls with PCP**
- **Coordinate with ancillary providers**
- **Assist with obtaining referrals – medical, legal, other**

# How SNUs Make a Difference

## “One Person at a Time”

- **Each special needs member’s coordination needs and challenges are unique and deserve the individualized attention necessary to get those needs met**

# Resources

Each Special Needs Unit, is required to have direct phone numbers, so members can dial directly into the Special needs unit, without having to first go through member services or other MCO staff. The staff members answering this line are either actual Case Managers or staff trained in assisting Special needs members and have the ability to directly connect members to a Case Manager as needed.



# HealthChoices Special Needs Units Phone #s

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Aetna Better Health</b>               | <b>1-855-346-9828</b> |
| <b>AmeriHealth Caritas</b>               | <b>1-800-684-5503</b> |
| <b>AmeriHealth Northeast</b>             | <b>1-888-498-0766</b> |
| <b>Geisinger Health Plan Family</b>      | <b>1-855-214-8100</b> |
| <b>Gateway Health Plan</b>               | <b>1-800-642-3550</b> |
| <b>Health Partners Plans</b>             | <b>1-866-500-4571</b> |
| <b>Keystone First Health Plan</b>        | <b>1-800-573-4100</b> |
| <b>United Health Care Community Plan</b> | <b>1-877-844-8844</b> |
| <b>UPMC for You</b>                      | <b>1-866-463-1462</b> |

# Special Needs Section Monitoring

- Special Needs Section staff work in close collaboration with the BMCO Monitoring and Compliance Staff to insure that each PH-MCO is in compliance with the Special Needs aspects of the HealthChoices Agreement
- Special Needs Section Staff conduct test calls to insure that there is open access to communication between HealthChoices Members and the Special Needs Unit of each PH-MCO

# Special Needs Section Monitoring

- Special Needs Section staff address inquires/concerns to DHS, including direct phone or e-mail communication, concerning issues related to members with Special Needs
  - Address issues directly with the PH-MCO Special Needs Unit Coordinator or via the BMCO Contract Manager for each individual PH-MCO
  - Convey resolution to issues/concerns back with referring person (Member or Member family, Advocate, Other DHS or Commonwealth Department Staff)

# Special Needs Section Monitoring

- Data base on inquires is maintained and any **pattern** of issues is followed up with the individual BMCO Monitoring and Compliance PH-MCO Manager to determine if there is a possible Agreement Compliance issue
- Serve as part of the Monitoring Team to determine corrective action for any HC Agreement Compliance issues

## DHS's Special Needs Staff in Harrisburg

Office of Medical Assistance Programs (OMAP) Bureau of Managed Care Operations, (BMCO) Division of Quality and Special Needs Coordination, (DQSNC), Special Needs Unit

- Special Needs Unit Director (**Eric Ulsh**)
- Unit Supervisor (**Katrina Becker**)
- Program Specialists (**Jeff Brannon, Julie Escobar**)
- Certified RN Case Managers (**Barb Florence, Jeanne Funk**)

## Communication is the KEY

Each DHS Special Needs staff member is assigned as the direct contact between DHS and each PH-MCOs  
**SNUC:**

- **Katrina Becker**, SNU Supervisor
- **Jeff Brannon** (Keystone First, Health Partner Plans)
- **Jeanne Funk** (Gateway Health Plan, UPMC for You)
- **Barb Florence** (AmeriHealth Caritas, AmeriHealth Northeast, United Health Plan)
- **Julie Escobar** (Geisinger Health Plan Family, Aetna)

**Direct, timely 2 way communication between BMCO SNU Staff and the PH-MCO SNU has been a proven hallmark of the HealthChoices Program.**

## Communication, A Two Way Street

- **Special Needs Section serves as a resource for the PH-MCO SNU for issues related to:**
  - **Members MA Eligibility**
  - **General questions about Office of Medical Assistance or other DHS programs**
  - **Issues involving other DHS program offices**
    - **Waiver enrollment/, coordination of care between PH-MCO and home and community based Waiver services**
    - **General communication/coordination with other DHS Program Offices or their county offices or community organizations**
- **Assistance with other PA Departments including**
  - **Aging, Health, Education, Labor and Industry (Office of Vocational Rehab (OVR), Office of Child Development (OCDEL))**

# Final Questions

**Thanks for the opportunity to share  
more information about the  
HealthChoices Special Needs Units**

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