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KanCare Implementation Activity: KanCare Consumer Ombudsman

Date Updated: Dec. 5, 2012

Purpose:

The ombudsman will help Kansas consumers enrolled in a KanCare plan, with a primary focus on individuals participating in the HCBS waiver program or receiving other long term care services through KanCare.

The ombudsman will assist KanCare consumers with access, service and benefit problems. The ombudsman will provide information about the KanCare grievance and appeal process that is available through the KanCare plans and the State fair hearing process, and assist KanCare consumers seek resolution to complaints or concerns regarding their fair treatment and interaction with their KanCare plan.

The ombudsman will:

- Help consumers to resolve service-related problems when resolution is not available directly through a provider or health plan.
- Help consumers understand and resolve billing issues, or notices of non-coverage.
- Assist consumers learn and navigate the grievance and appeal process at the KanCare plan, and the State fair hearing process, and help them as needed.
- Assist consumers to seek remedies when they feel their rights have been violated.
- Assist consumers understand their KanCare plan and how to interact with the programs benefits.
- Serve as a point of contact and resource for legislative and other inquiries into the provision of LTSS in managed care.

Organization:

The KanCare Ombudsman will be located in the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS). The Ombudsman will be organizationally independent from other KDADS commissions which set and direct Medicaid program, and reimbursement policy. The Ombudsman will receive administrative and legal support from the Office of the Secretary division of KDADS.

The Ombudsman will make an annual report to the legislature detailing the activities of the office and other relevant information related to the provision of LTSS in KanCare.

Personnel:

Recruitment of candidates for the Ombudsman position began November 12. Interviews are scheduled for the week of November 26. The Ombudsman will be selected and hired by January 1, 2013.

Program and Training:

Initially, the Ombudsman will be trained on the grievance and appeals process available through the KanCare plans, and the State fair hearing process, as well as the utilization management policies and procedures adopted by the KanCare plans, State Medicaid policy and the State contract governing the KanCare plans.

Additionally, the Ombudsman will receive orientation covering Kansas eligibility processes, KanCare covered benefits, and care coordination.

The Ombudsman will work with consumers and providers in distributing information about the Ombudsman services. Contact information for the Ombudsman will be provided through state processes and contractors such as eligibility offices, KanCare hotline and mailings, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, KanCare member materials, and consumer and provider advocates.

In addition to assisting consumers with the items listed in the overview, the Ombudsman will provide information, assistance, and referrals to consumers with issues not covered in the Ombudsman's scope of work.

Supporting Resources:

The Ombudsman will be presented as a source for assistance when a consumer cannot find an acceptable outcome by speaking directly with their KanCare plan, or through the normal processes. While the Ombudsman will be trained on eligibility criteria and covered benefits, the State does not expect the Ombudsman's office to be the first contact for all such questions. The state's enrollment broker, MCO call centers, State eligibility staff, and the ADRC are established resources for member inquiries. Similarly, while the Ombudsman will assist individuals exercise their rights to the grievance and appeals process, the Ombudsman is not expected to file or represent the consumer in the grievance or appeal. The Ombudsman will assist in mediating those cases that cannot be handled by state eligibility case workers, hotline staff, or the ADRC, when assistance is needed in starting a grievance or appeal, and when satisfaction cannot be obtained through the grievance and appeals processes.

There have not been calls for an Ombudsman program for the current managed care population, suggesting the new Ombudsman's efforts will likely be focused on the new populations entering managed care. The following additional resources can be added as needed:

In the event contacts with the Ombudsman office exceed capacity of the full time Ombudsman, up to five administrative positions can be reallocated to assist in providing information and referral services to consumers seeking assistance with issues that may be properly addressed by other entities. These administrative positions may be supported by 40 QM staff with training and knowledge of the waiver systems. Administrative staff and QM support will identify and transfer appropriate cases to the Ombudsman.

Additionally, the Ombudsman will receive legal support through the office of the Secretary. The office of the Secretary includes nine legal staff that can support the Ombudsman with legal research and information.

These resources will be made available to the Ombudsman as need develops and may be deployed within five business days.

Following the implementation and transition to KanCare, the Ombudsman will develop volunteer resources in the state to assist in one-to-one assistance and other cases.

Policy and Advocacy:

As noted, the Ombudsman will advocate for the rights and proper treatment of KanCare consumers through direct involvement and mediation with consumers, State policy divisions, and KanCare plans. Additionally, the Ombudsman will represent the Secretary of KDADS on consumer councils and focus groups convened by the KanCare plans, and provide the Secretary with counsel on suggested policy changes or additions to enhance consumer protections and engagement under KanCare. The Ombudsman will present the Legislature an annual report detailing the activities of the office, summarizing major issues of concern, and present suggested policy changes or additions to enhance consumer protections and engagement under KanCare.

Coordination with Quality Oversight:

KanCare program quality and outcome performance will be monitored through an Interagency Monitoring Team, which includes program managers, contract managers, fiscal staff and other relevant staff/resources from both KDHE and KDADS. Key activities of the KanCare Ombudsman will be included as a critical component of monitoring the performance of MCOs and providers within the KanCare program, as part of the statewide quality improvement strategy and the operating protocols of the Interagency Monitoring Team.