

Governor's Column – 6/9/02

Most of us are familiar with the struggles of dealing with the health care system. Whether through caring for a family member, a friend, or ourselves, the intricacies and the expenses of medical issues are never easy.

We're working hard to change that.

Today, there are more than 650,000 Mississippians depending on the work currently being done by a group of dedicated physicians, pharmacists and health care professionals, along with my staff. These individuals are the ones who depend on Medicaid to meet their health care needs.

The more than 30 members of the Governor's Health Care Commission, each volunteering his or her own time, are keenly aware of the importance of their cooperative effort with the Division of Medicaid to restructure the health care program that serves so many of our people.

With the affirmation of Rica Lewis Payton's authority to restructure Medicaid and an assurance of reasonable funding from the legislative leadership, we set about with the creation of this Commission. We selected a broad range of individuals from all over the state, and each of them is committed to the work before them.

The work they are doing is exacting, it is detailed, and it is focused on creating the most effective and efficient Medicaid program in the nation.

Chaired by Dr. Dwalia South of the Family Medical Clinic in Ripley, the Commission will hold its third meeting on Monday, June 10. The meetings held to date have been extremely productive, offering a unique insight into the views and ideas of both the health care community and those it serves.

The work of the Commission is enhanced through a partnership with the Social Science Research Center's Decision Support Laboratory at Mississippi State University and the Bower Foundation. NASA's John C. Stennis Space Center also helped the partnership by providing technical support in the initial meeting.

This technology and the software applications for it have increased the productivity of the Commission. By enhancing their ability to prioritize, plan, compile statistics and produce immediate results of their work, Commission members are better able to do the work they have been called to do.

As part of their efforts, the professionals serving on the Commission are also attending meetings of the Medicaid Working Group appointed by the legislative leadership.

There is a great deal of work to be covered by these individuals. Prescription drugs, nursing homes, and a host of other health care services are being examined and the end result will be a better way of life for those Mississippians – seniors, disabled and children – who depend on Medicaid.

The flexibility to manage the Medicaid program demands the flexibility to commit to medical services when they are needed, and we will not be satisfied until we know the people of this state are receiving health care when they need it.

We're all working for the same thing – the best health care possible for the people of Mississippi. Through the work of a group of dedicated health care professionals, we're going to reach that goal.