

Pacific Islands Report

Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Center
With Support From Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai'i

Medicaid Approves Am. Samoa Hospital's Corrective Action Plan

LBJ Medical Center to undergo unannounced compliance visits

By Fili Sagapolutele

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa (The Samoa News, April 19, 2015) – The U.S. Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) have approved the last four remaining non compliance issues for LBJ Medical Center, and chief executive officer, Taufete'e John Faumuina says CMS plans to conduct unannounced visits to ensure all matters in the corrective action plan have been addressed.

During a Senate Health/LBJ Committee hearing last week, CEO Taufete'e told senators that one of the major issues faced by management is to address all of the non-compliance issues which had been cited in the CMS report.

He said hospital staff and management worked diligently to address all of the non-compliance matters and the last remaining issues were approved some three weeks ago by CMS.

However, he cautioned that while approval was granted, CMS has also informed the hospital that they will make another unannounced visit to make sure that corrective measures have actually been implemented.

Responding to Samoa News inquiries, CMS's San Francisco Region 9 spokesman Jack Cheevers could only confirm that the federal agency "has approved LBJ's plan for correction, for both the hospital and the End Stage Renal Disease treatment facility" (which is the Dialysis Clinic).

A CMS survey conducted last June found that the hospital was out of compliance with more than ten issues, including Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI); Medical Staff; Nursing Services; and Respiratory Care Services.

Another major issue of concern for CMS was the Dialysis Clinic in which the survey documented several non-compliance issues.

In its fiscal year 2015 first-quarter performance report, the hospital revealed that recruitment of CMS regulated personnel and administration are two main challenges that LBJ is trying to address, especially in the area of funding.

Therefore, the report says, LBJ has reached out to other ASG agencies, such as the Department of Human and Social Services, Public Safety, Department of Health and possibly the local Medicaid Office for help and assistance.

The report — covering Oct. 1-Dec. 31, 2014 — also says that LBJ will need to get CMS approval and certification before the 10-bed mental health facility — funded with \$4.7 million in capital improvement project funds — can render service at the facility, which is located in the hospital compound.

FEDERAL BILL

New federal legislation, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Gus Billirakis of Florida, calls for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to publish, and periodically update on the Internet site of the CMS, information on Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) carried out in the insular areas.

Such information is to include income levels established by the territory for purposes of eligibility of an individual to receive medical assistance under Medicaid or child health assistance under CHIP; the number of individuals enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP in such a territory; and the systems in place for the furnishing of health care items and services under Medicaid and CHIP in such territory.

The measure, "Medicaid and CHIP Territory Transparency and Information Act" is to provide for greater transparency and information with respect to Federal expenditures under the Medicaid and CHIP programs.

Referred to the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, the bill is co-sponsored by all Delegates from the U.S. territories including Congresswoman Aumua Amata.

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