

Student Abstract

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Title: Katie Beckett Medicaid Program in Georgia: Were the Changes in the Level of Care Criteria Proper?

Abstract: A vital source of health coverage for thousands of Georgia's disabled and mentally-ill children has until recently been the optional Medicaid category known as the Katie Beckett program. The Katie Beckett program alters Medicaid's traditional income deeming rules for children who live at home instead of a medical institution even though they require the level of care provided in institutions. Georgia's Department of Community Health assesses eligibility by making several determinations, including whether the child requires an institutional level of care. In November 2004, the Department issued new, more stringent criteria for its level of care determination. The implementation of the new criteria has resulted in a dramatic decline in eligibility and an outcry by families. The purpose of this poster is to discuss whether the Department properly implemented the new level of care criteria, specifically, whether the Department followed federal and state requirements in promulgating the criteria. Federal and state statutes, regulations, and cases were analyzed to discuss the legality of the Department's actions. Department records, interviews with advocates, and journal and news articles were utilized to discuss the program and recommendations for future actions. The discussion demonstrates how effective advocacy can initiate improvements and hold the Department accountable. Moreover, the analysis reveals Georgia's failure to meet the various types of needs of its disabled children and presents recommendations for how Georgia can better meet those needs.