

# Determining Medicaid Network Adequacy using a Secret Shopper Survey

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# Legislative Finance Committee (LFC)

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Established in 1957

- Non-partisan legislative staff
  - *Fiscal Analysts* each assigned a block of agencies assist with budget recommendations
  - *Economists* charged with revenue estimation
  - *Program Evaluators* charged with ensuring accountability in government

New Mexico is one of five states in which both the governor and a legislative agency propose a comprehensive state budget to the full legislature.

# LFC Program Evaluation Unit

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Staff of 14 evaluators

Staff produce 10-12 evaluations a year

LFC has broad statutory authority to examine and evaluate the finances and operation of all departments, agencies, and institutions of New Mexico and all of its political subdivisions (Section 2-5-3 NMSA 1978).

Focus on the biggest budget areas, including Medicaid which is what we will be talking about today

# Evaluation Topic and Objectives

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In Fall 2023 conducted an evaluation examining Medicaid Provider Network Adequacy, Access and Utilization in New Mexico.

The evaluation's goals were to :

- Assess the **adequacy** of the New Mexico Medicaid provider network and **identify potential gaps**;
- Determine potential barriers to service access by Medicaid enrollees including uptake of Medicaid patients and time to treatment;
- Analyze Medicaid utilization rates and examine how these relate to program funding and capitation rates; and
- Identify primary cost drivers contributing to Medicaid expenses.

# Ways New Mexico Measures Network Adequacy

**Figure 3. Standards for Network Adequacy are Generally Met for Primary Care and Urban Areas but not in Rural Communities or for Behavioral Health**

		Ratios	Distance	Timeliness
Type of Care		Primary Care	✓	✗*
		Specialty Care	N/A	✗
		Behavioral Health	N/A	✗

Note: Timeliness based on overall, for routine appointments, primary care is usually able to meet standards.

Source: LFC analysis of MCO and HSD data

# MCOs conduct secret shopper surveys...

- BUT data on access to timely care was insufficient
- Data provided by MCOs was outdated (at least 1 year old)
- Some MCOs had very small sample sizes (e.g. some with an n=1)
- This led LFC to conduct our own secret shopper survey

**Table 7. Percent of Providers Compliant with HSD Timeliness Standards by Category (of those providers scheduling appointments)**

	MCO A	MCO B	MCO C
<b>Primary Care</b>			
Routine Asymptomatic	72%	32%	75%
Routine Symptomatic	61%	53%	
Urgent	22%	11%	83%
<b>Behavioral Health</b>			
Substance Use Routine	50%	100%	38%
Substance Use Urgent	0%*		31%
Practitioner Routine	60%	63%	13%
Practitioner Urgent	16%	0%	0%

Note: Data for MCO C is from 2020 and for MCOs A and B is for 2021.

Source: MCO secret shopper survey reports

# LFC staff conducted a secret shopper survey to determine access challenges

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LFC staff conducted a secret shopper survey to learn more regarding if enrollees could access care when they needed it.

Examined physical and behavioral health

Contacted primary care providers including OBGYN, family practice, pediatricians, and internists, as well as counselors, psychologists, and other behavioral health therapists

# Methodology in Conducting the Secret Shopper Survey

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Used MCO provider directories to determine total number of primary care providers and behavioral health providers

Sampled providers in counties with the greatest increases in Medicaid enrollment since the pandemic. The selected counties included three urban counties (Bernalillo, Dona Ana, and Santa Fe), three rural counties (Chaves, McKinley, and San Juan), and one frontier county (Mora)

Determined adequate sample size for a 5 percent margin of error and a 90 percent confidence interval (need to call 487 total providers, 251 PCPs and 236 BH)

4 LFC staff called created basic scripts to help calls be relatively uniform

Called providers over the course of 4 weeks in Fall 2022



# Analyzing the Secret Shopper Survey Results

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LFC staff contacted 252 PCPs and 236 BH providers.

Calls were coded into one of 11 categories based on consumer experience.

## **Coding Categories of Consumer Experience for LFC Secret Shopper Survey**

0. Provider number not listed or unable to locate provider
1. Determined provider was inappropriate for primary care
2. Could not get through to provider
3. Left voicemail, call not returned
4. Left voicemail, call was returned but unable to connect
5. Provider no longer with office
6. Provider did not accept Medicaid
7. Provider not accepting new patients at this time
8. Put on waitlist
9. Might be able to schedule an appointment after submitting paperwork or initial in-person visit
10. Appointment offered

# In NM it was difficult to get timely primary care appointments....

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## LFC Secret Shopper Survey Results Primary Care Physicians (PCPs)

Survey Result	Count	Percent
1. Provider number not listed or unable to locate provider	54	21%
2. Determined provider was inappropriate for primary care	26	10%
3. Could not get through to provider	35	14%
4. Left voicemail, call not returned	20	8%
5. Left voicemail, call was returned but unable to connect	0	0%
6. Provider no longer with office	20	8%
7. Provider did not accept Medicaid	1	0%
8. Provider not accepting new patients at this time	47	19%
9. Put on waitlist	3	1%
10. Might be able to schedule an appointment after submitting paperwork or initial in-person visit	8	3%
11. Appointment offered	38	15%

Source: LFC Secret Shopper Survey

# ...And even more difficult to get behavioral health appointments

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**LFC Secret Shopper Survey Results of Behavioral Health Providers**

Survey Result	Count	Percent
1. Provider number not listed or unable to locate provider	24	10%
2. Determined provider was inappropriate for primary care	18	8%
3. Could not get through to provider	15	6%
4. Left voicemail, call not returned	59	25%
5. Left voicemail, call was returned but unable to connect	10	4%
6. Provider no longer with office	19	8%
7. Provider did not accept Medicaid	2	1%
8. Provider not accepting new patients at this time	38	16%
9. Put on waitlist	19	8%
10. Might be able to schedule an appointment after submitting paperwork or initial in-person visit	9	4%
11. Appointment offered	23	10%

Source: LFC Secret Shopper Survey

# To improve access to timely care LFC proposed numerous recommendations

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The key recommendations included:

- Appropriating funds for provider rate increases to bring Medicaid rates to parity with Medicare and provide additional targeted increases, including for primary care, behavioral health, and maternal and child health;
- Ensuring the state agency keeps provisions in the new MCO contract that included requiring quarterly secret shopper surveys with representative samples, specific penalties around network adequacy and nonemergency medical transportation; and
- Strengthening primary care provider ratios in MCO contracts to bring closer to current ratios and consider variation for urban, rural, and frontier geographies.
- Enacting legislation to allow New Mexico to enter into medical, psychology, counseling, and social work compacts.
- Develop a comprehensive statewide network adequacy assessment and report to the Legislature annually about adequacy of the state's Medicaid provider network;

# Questions

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