NC Medicaid Transformation – EBCI Tribal Option Fact Sheet

NC Medicaid Managed Care
Medicaid Transformation is changing the way most people receive Medicaid and NC Health Choice services. In 2015, the NC General Assembly enacted Session Law 2015-245, which directed the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to transition Medicaid and NC Health Choice to managed care.

North Carolina is implementing an innovative approach to managed care that is guided by DHHS' vision to improve the health of North Carolinians through a person-centered and well-coordinated system of care that addresses medical and non-medical drivers of health.

Most beneficiaries will receive their Medicaid services through insurance companies, called health plans. A hallmark of the transformation process is the integration of physical and behavioral health. Patients in managed care will access these services, along with pharmacy benefits, through their health plan.

The EBCI Tribal Option
DHHS and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) are collaborating to create an additional managed care option called the EBCI Tribal Option, targeted to begin in July 2021. The EBCI proposed the development of a Tribal Option to build on its strong medical home model and deliver high-quality care at the local level. The EBCI Tribal Option will help tribal members and their families navigate the health care system and access a well-coordinated set of health services.

The EBCI Tribal Option will be managed by the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority (CIHA), which is the primary medical home for more than 13,000 members of the EBCI (including approximately 4,000 Medicaid beneficiaries). CIHA has a 20-bed inpatient unit and provides more than 35,000 yearly primary care visits, more than 16,000 yearly emergency room visits, and its pharmacy fills more than 230,000 prescriptions annually. CIHA has several satellite clinics, including the Cherokee County Clinic, Immediate Care Center and the Snowbird Health Clinic. Additionally, CIHA has a robust Behavioral Health continuum of care that offers substance abuse residential support, recovery services, Child Welfare Integrated Team, Cherokee Central Schools Integrated Team, child therapy services, psychiatry, and women and children's residential support. As a Tribal Organization, CIHA is well-positioned to manage the health care needs of tribal members and their families in a manner that embraces Cherokee culture and addresses health disparities prevalent to the EBCI, such as diabetes, depression and substance abuse.

The EBCI Tribal Option will build on North Carolina's Medicaid model of whole-person care that integrates all aspects of medical, nutritional, behavioral, pharmacy, and social needs. The EBCI Tribal Option will be a primary care case management entity, which will have a strong focus on primary care, preventive health, managing chronic disease, and providing a set of care management services to members with significant health and social needs.

The EBCI Tribal Option will be a fee-for-service model in which health care providers who serve Tribal Option members will be reimbursed by DHHS. Additionally, DHHS will pay CIHA a monthly case management fee for each enrolled member to support care coordination and care management activities.

Most federally recognized tribal members will have several options for receiving health services through NC Medicaid. Beginning in February 2020, many will have the option to remain in NC Medicaid Direct (the current fee-for-service program) or to enroll in a health plan. On the anticipated start date of July 2021, eligible members will have the new option to enroll in the EBCI Tribal Option, and some members may also choose specialized plans that offer integrated services for members with significant behavioral health/intellectual disabilities. Pending legislative change, certain family members who are eligible for Indian Health Services also will be able to enroll in the EBCI Tribal Option. The EBCI Tribal Option will be offered primarily in five counties: Cherokee, Graham, Haywood, Jackson and Swain.

As DHHS and the EBCI will share additional information as the EBCI Tribal Option continues to be developed. Please send questions to Medicaid.Transformation@dhhs.nc.gov.