

New Proposal for Tribal Clinics May Boost Health Care Options for Nevada Medicaid Recipients

Nevada's American Indian tribes have had difficulty improving their health-care options because tribal clinics have only been able to provide and bill for services rendered within the "four walls" of the clinic. A recent change to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)' interpretation of this limitation will allow tribal clinics to contract with providers outside of the clinic, which will increase access to care for their Medicaid-eligible recipients.

Set for implementation early this year, the amendment to the Medicaid State Plan will allow tribal clinics to change their designation to Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) with Nevada Medicaid.

"This will allow the clinics to develop contracts and care coordination agreements with specialists and other health care providers around the state," said Jodi Patton, a Social Services Program Specialist III with the state's Division of Health Care Financing and Policy (DHCFP).

DHCFP administers the Nevada Medicaid program.

"The providers would then be able to directly bill for their services," Patton added.

The services billed through a tribal clinic for Medicaid-eligible patients who are American Indian or Alaska Natives receive a full Federal Medical Assistance Percentage, a funding match that positively impacts state funds.

The Nevada tribes and DHCFP have been working together on this change for more than a year through tribal consultation and workshops.

"Ultimately, this change will increase access to care for the American Indian and Alaska Native population, which will ideally lead to improved health care outcomes and improved quality of life," Patton said of the new FQHC designation.