

## **CMS Issues and Arkansas' Eligibility and Enrollment Framework (EEF) Project**

### **CMS Online Application Issues**

- The federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) did not provide a completed electronic application until April 2013. This left Arkansas only five months to stand up a Medicaid eligibility system capable of handling the new eligibility requirements in time for Open Enrollment. As all resources were needed to meet the October 2013 deadline, the development team that had been focused on the post-application change of circumstance work had to be diverted to instead focus on the original application effort. This delayed the change of circumstance work effort until November 2013.
- When the Affordable Care Act was passed, with its many changes to Medicaid requirements and eligibility criteria, Arkansas' implementation plan was to direct citizens to [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) for eligibility determination. Since Arkansas was a determination state, eligibility was to be determined by the Federally-Facilitated Marketplace (FFM) and those determined eligible would be passed and enrolled electronically in to Arkansas' EEF system. When the federal government's online application system failed, the vast majority of applications were re-directed to the Arkansas EEF system. The number of application processed by the Arkansas EEF system greatly exceeded the original projections. Processing significantly more applications than expected greatly increased the help desk work load, requiring resources to be moved from working on future releases to handling help desk issues. Arkansas has received approximately 490,000 applications since October 2013.

### **CMS Policy Issues**

Receiving clear policy guidance and answers from CMS regarding new Medicaid requirements has been extremely difficult. Between the Arkansas EEF project start-up in April 2013 and the go-live in October 2013, CMS issued 17 final rules that had to be implemented by the state, out of a total of 983 proposed rules, final rules, and notices (consisting of more than 18,000 pages) issued by CMS that the state has had to react to.

- Arkansas began its conversations with CMS regarding renewals strategies in January 2013. CMS policy for renewals changed repeatedly between January and July delaying the EEF renewal solution. Arkansas' final solution was not approved for development until August 2013.
- CMS policy webinars frequently contained incorrect information and would require policy follow-ups from CMS after the webinar. The EEF project has reached out to CMS numerous times requesting policy clarifications and guidance. The CMS response time has been very slow and in some cases contradictory to previous guidance.

## **CMS Determination State issues**

- Under the original memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the state and the federal government, Arkansas was a determination state, meaning that eligibility for Arkansas citizens who applied via the Federally Facilitated Marketplace (FFM) would be determined by the FFM. The FFM would determine the citizens' eligibility and send their records to Arkansas for enrollment in Arkansas Medicaid. The FFM mandate was to resolve all eligibility/verification issues and determine eligibility for Arkansas citizens before sending the citizen's record to Arkansas. Arkansas' role was to provide the Medicaid program determined by the FFM. However, the FFM has not fulfilled its' mandate and this has required that Arkansas take a significant amount of the eligibility determination work. This has meant that the EEF project had to make numerous changes to Curam to handle the FFM records and spend hundreds of hours making data fixes to correct FFM data.
- In late 2014, CMS provided the 2015 MOU to Arkansas. In the new MOU, CMS has now changed the definition of "Determination state." As noted above, the original agreement was to direct applicants to the FFM who would then verify client information and be sent to Arkansas electronically to be enrolled without any manual intervention. The EEF system was planned on that premise. Under the 2015 MOU, CMS will now send applicants for whom the FFM was not able to resolve inconsistencies. This has forced developers to put in "stops" in the EEF system to prevent auto-enrollment on accounts received from the FFM. Work continues on development of functionality to resolve inconsistencies received from the FFM.
- The FFM data files have been wrought with incorrect data, incorrect eligibility determinations, and missing data requiring the EEF project staff to spend hours correcting the data, contacting customers for the correct information, etc.
  - The FFM has repeatedly sent records of individuals identified as eligible who, based on the income on the FFM file, were clearly ineligible, requiring EEF staff to correct the individual's eligibility.
- In June 2014, CMS contacted Arkansas to advise that CMS had transferred approximately 4,700 accounts to enroll that they subsequently identified as ineligible. CMS directed the state to disenroll the clients. Many subsequently applied via the Arkansas state portal; the state verified their information and re-enrolled them. After further discussion, CMS told Arkansas to re-enroll all 4,700, again due to CMS error. The state then reached out and reenrolled those who had been erroneously disenrolled.

- In September 2014, CMS informed Arkansas that they were “behind” in their processing of applications. Via conference call they communicated that they had over 13,000 Arkansas applications received between 10/1/2013 and 4/30/2014 that had not been processed by the FFM. In fact, they relayed that no communication had been sent to these applicants at all. CMS requested Arkansas’ help regarding these pending applications, some of which had been pending almost 12 months. EEF staff was asked to compare these applicants to citizens that had already been enrolled via the Arkansas system. Approximately 5,700 had already been enrolled via the EEF system, and approximately 8,200 had not. To fulfill this CMS request, the EEF project had to dedicate developer hours to complete the work for CMS.
- There have been countless other inconsistencies in data sent to Arkansas as a determination state which has caused EEF staff and vendors to spend development hours adding functionality to the EEF system to correct inconsistent federal data or to prevent ineligible citizens from being enrolled from the FFM. DHS eligibility staff must also reach out to these applicants to gather information in order to determine eligibility. After the information is gathered from the client, developers must manually enter the information in to the FFM electronic file to enroll them. These issues continue. Examples:
  - Incomplete addresses
  - No SSN
  - Duplicate enrollment data
  - Income exceeds eligible limits
  - No relationships to other household members
  - No tax filing status
  - No pregnancy due dates
  - No number of unborn children
- CMS continues to change functionality with little notice to states.
  - Example: In August 2014, CMS issued new requirements for account transfer that radically changed the schema for states to send accounts to the FFM and also to receive accounts from the FFM. The requirements were published in August and states were expected to update system schemas for an October implementation. This short timeframe mandated the EEF project to divert development resources from critical development to implement these requirements.
  - Example: On June 2, EEF staff received an email alerting them to a certificate change which must be installed in the EEF system by June 8. If not installed, the EEF system will lose connectivity with the data services hub which is where EEF verifies client information electronically. Again, EEF staff have had to divert development resources in order to accomplish this unplanned work.

### **CMS FFM Testing Issues**

In order to verify information via the federal hub and receive eligibility records from FFM, Arkansas had to test with the FFM/Federal Hub. However, the testing times and data was strictly controlled by the FFM. This resulted in limited test time; CMS only allowed testing on certain days for certain aspects.

- End to End testing was only available on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9:30 to 2:00 pm.
- Formal Harness testing from 9:30 am to 9:30 pm.
- Remote identity proofing (RIDP) testing available only on Thursdays from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

The CMS test data for the testing above contained incorrect citizen data and was inadequate to conducting testing. CMS provided approximately 200 test cases for end-to-end testing of the EEF system. And unfortunately, cases could only be tested one time. This meant that EEF testing efforts were severely constrained. Due to limited testing resources via CMS, Arkansas spent development time creating its own “test harness” in order to complete more robust testing of the system.