

Ask state legislators to support Medicaid expansion



**CATHY ABRAMSON, DIRECTOR,
UNIT I**

Our Behavioral Health Program just recently went through its CARF accreditation survey. The final outcome will be known in about six weeks. During the exit conference, the surveyors shared many positive remarks concerning the quality and improvements made in our program. I would like to commend all of the Behavioral Health staff for their dedication and commitment to excellence.

The surveyors visited us

six years ago and stated that we have come a long way since their first visit here. Our Behavioral Health Program provides outpatient mental health and substance abuse services for our members in the seven-county service area. We have an excellent staff and I am very proud of them! I would especially like to thank Julie Barber, Ashley LaFaver, and a special thanks to Debbie Sirk, who went above and beyond to help make the accreditation site visit such a positive experience.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Michigan is in the process of deciding whether to implement the expanded Medicaid provisions under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). You may be aware that Michigan declined to run a state-operated health exchange and is reluctant to adopt the Medicaid expansion provisions. The tribe feels that the uninsured tribal members would benefit greatly from the additional coverage provided under Medicaid expansion. It is extremely

important that you contact your state legislator and ask them to support the Medicaid expansion.

Our state legislators in the seven-county service area:

Governor Rick Snyder, P.O. Box 30013, Lansing, Michigan 48909, (517) 373-3400;

District 37 State Senator Howard Walker, P.O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909-7536, (517) 373-2413

District 38 State Senator Tom Casperson, P.O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909-7536, (517) 373-7840

District 107 Representative Frank Foster, S-1486 House Office Building, P.O. Box 30014, Lansing, MI 48909, (517) 373-2629

District 108 Representative Edward McBroom, P.O. Box 30014, Lansing, MI 48933, (517) 373-0156

District 109 Representative Steven Lindberg, P.O. Box 30014, Lansing, MI 48909-7514; (517) 373-0498

You can find your state representative by visiting www.house.michigan.gov/mhrpublic

for the House of Representatives and your state senator by going to www.senate.michigan.gov/fysenator/fysenator.htm.

Right now, our tribe is working on understanding all the opportunities and benefits offered under ACA to better serve our members. The ACA is very confusing and at the federal level it is still being rolled out slowly. In the next six months, there will be a lot of policy development, educational materials and sessions and information and data gathering from members, to name a few.

The tribe will do whatever we can to help its members understand this. Because it is such a large, and continuously evolving process, I can guarantee you that it will be very confusing and frustrating to understand for most tribal members. I get frustrated just thinking about it. At this time, there are still a lot of unknowns and we can only do our best to bring this new health care to you all. There are some

very informative sites such as www.nihb.org/tribalhealthreform, www.nativeexchange.org, www.enrollamerica.org and www.healthcare.gov/index.html.

Again, you will be receiving educational materials and information within the next six months.

TRIBAL ELECTIONS

I have requested that we have a full-day workshop with our election committee. Before you know it, election time will be here. If any changes are going to be made, they must be done before elections begin.

CONCLUSION

It's been a great year for maple syrup and, for those of you who do not live up north in the Upper Peninsula, this is, I believe, the winter that does not want to end. Because of that, the sap continues to run. Spring is a time for new beginnings.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you. Please contact me at (906) 322-3823 or email me at: cabramson@sault-tribe.net.