



PA INSURANCE INSIGHTS

The Pennsylvania Insurance Department Newsletter

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pennsylvania
INSURANCE DEPARTMENT

A message from the Acting Insurance Commissioner...

I am excited and humbled by Governor Wolf giving me the opportunity to lead the Insurance Department as we face so many issues important to Pennsylvania consumers. Having worked as former Commissioner Miller's chief of staff for more than two years, I saw the tremendous positive impact the policies she and Governor Wolf put in place had on insurance consumers in our state. While the standard Commissioner Miller set is indeed a high one, I am confident working with the dedicated staff at the department, and with the Governor's full support, I will maintain that standard.

Former Commissioner Miller remains in the cabinet, now leading the Department of Human Services (DHS) as its acting secretary, and she and I will continue a close working relationship. In fact, fulfilling an invitation extended before the move to DHS, former Commissioner Miller testified to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions on steps the federal government can take to stabilize the individual health insurance market under the Affordable Care Act in Pennsylvania. As



head of DHS, Acting Secretary Miller serves more than 700,000 Pennsylvanians who now have health coverage because of Governor Wolf's expanded Medicaid. She told senators that bipartisan cooperation is needed to make targeted improvements to the ACA, but the law overall is working well for most Pennsylvanians.

One example of how the ACA is benefiting Pennsylvanians is the provision making required school vaccinations available at no cost to families, under nearly all insurance policies.

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A message from the Insurance Commissioner...

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Former Commissioner Miller discussed this at a news conference last month, reminding parents because of the ACA, they don't have to worry about cost when getting these important shots to protect their children's health.

One of Governor Wolf's top priorities is battling the opioid crisis, and the Insurance Department has released a brochure helping people better understand what coverage they have, depending on whether they get their health coverage on the individual market, through an employer, or through a government program. The brochure was

debuted at one of seven meetings on the opioid crisis organized by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Greensburg, to provide community support for people battling this problem.

Every penny counts for homebuyers, and another new brochure from the Insurance Department helps these consumers learn how to get a report on insurance claims made on the home they are considering buying. The CLUE report lists claims filed on a property over the past seven years, and helps insure prospective buyers know

the history of the home and that the claims listed are accurate, as insurers can use these to set the rate for homeowners' coverage.

Flood insurance remains an important consideration across Pennsylvania, and at a public meeting in Lewisburg, I urged Congress to include support for private flood coverage in the reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Plan, now being debated.

Jessica Altman
Acting Insurance Commissioner

Former Commissioner Miller Joins Wolf Administration Officials to Discuss School Vaccines

Another school year has started in Pennsylvania, and with it comes a change in the time allowed for students to get required vaccinations. In prior years, parents had eight months from the beginning of the school year to either get their children the required vaccines, or put in place a plan to do so. This year, that time frame was shortened to five days.

Acting Health Secretary and Physician General Dr. Rachel Levine told a news conference at Carlisle High School in Cumberland County it didn't make sense for children to be in a classroom potentially exposed to disease for essentially the entire school year under the old rules.

Former Commissioner Miller told the gathering that one of the benefits of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is that under almost all commercial insurance plans, as well as employer plans where the company is self-insured, preventive

care services such as school vaccinations are available at no cost to families. This means that parents aren't responsible for any co-pays or deductibles that may apply to their coverage in general, provided the shots are administered by an in-network health care provider.

The former commissioner said that this is an important benefit for families, many of whom face significant back-to-school costs for items such as new clothes and school supplies, and may worry, especially if there are multiple children who need vaccines in the household, about the potential cost of these shots.

She added

that this is a benefit of the ACA that is often overlooked in the debate about premiums in the individual health care market. But, she said, it is an important benefit enjoyed by many Pennsylvania families, and should be kept in mind as discussions continue in Washington over possible repeal and replacement of the ACA.



Former Insurance Commissioner Teresa Miller discusses preventive care and vaccines with other Wolf Administration officials at Carlisle High School in Cumberland County on August 8.

Former Commissioner Miller Testifies to Senate HELP Committee

Acting Secretary of Human Services and Former Insurance Commissioner Teresa Miller recently represented the Wolf Administration at a bipartisan hearing held by the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) on stabilizing individual markets around the country.

Former Commissioner Miller joined insurance commissioners from Alaska, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Washington to discuss opportunities for bipartisan cooperation to make short-term fixes to stabilize individual markets and help avoid significant premium increases on plans sold in these markets. Miller has been an outspoken advocate for repairing and strengthening areas of the Affordable Care Act that are not working as well as they should rather than scrapping the progress the law has made altogether.

“While the health reform debate has without question been partisan, the goals we are trying to achieve are not, and recognizing the real problems that exist in our health care system should not be either,” Miller said at the hearing. “We all want Americans to have access to the care they need and be able to afford that care. We also want them to have choices, and that means supporting a competitive health insurance marketplace that can provide that choice.”

Former Commissioner Miller shared multiple changes that could improve the strength of individual markets around the country in both the near future and over time, including:

- Allocating funds to ensure cost-sharing reduction payments are made for at least all of 2018;

- Preserving the individual mandate;
- Reversing cuts made by the Trump Administration and continuing robust and active outreach programs to encourage enrollment;
- Streamlining the Section 1332 State Innovation waiver process;
- Working to understand and address the growing underlying costs of health care.

The former commissioner also highlighted ideas proposed by a group of bipartisan governors, including Governor Tom Wolf. The group, led by Governors John Kasich (R-Ohio) and John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.), is working to ensure that health care reform is bipartisan and does not negatively impact coverage improvements made by the Affordable Care Act.

Former Commissioner Miller’s full written testimony is available on the department’s website here.

Alison Beam Joins PID as Chief of Staff

Alison Beam recently returned to the Insurance Department, assuming the role of chief of staff. She previously served as policy director for the agency, assisting the commissioner with developing strategic objectives that adhered to the policy principles and goals of the administration.

Ms. Beam has also served as director of public policy and association affairs for Independence Health Group in Philadelphia, guiding interaction with regulators, legislators, and national trade associations, while also developing and implementing internal response strategies. In addition, she was a senior consultant at McBee Associates, a health care consulting firm in New York City, focusing on Medicare billing and health care facility personnel management.

Ms. Beam holds a Bachelor of Science degree in health policy and administration from Penn State, and a law degree from Drexel University School of Law.



Insurance Commissioners Julie Mix-McPeak (Tennessee), Mike Kreidler (Washington), Lori Wing-Heier (Alaska), Former Commissioner Miller, and John Doak (Oklahoma) testify before the Senate HELP Committee on September 6.

Insurance Department Releases Brochure on CLUE Reports

Buying a home is often the largest investment a family will make, so every penny counts. Making sure you get the homeowners' insurance you need, but don't overpay because of inaccuracies in the property claims history, is the focus of a new consumer brochure made available by the Pennsylvania Insurance Department.

Acting Commissioner Altman introduced the CLUE brochure at a homebuyers' seminar in Scranton, conducted by NeighborWorks Northeastern Pennsylvania. The brochure informs consumers how they can request a report on any claims filed, and how much was paid out, on the property they are considering buying over the past seven years.

CLUE stands for Comprehensive Loss Underwriting Exchange, and these reports are owned and maintained by LexisNexis Risk Solutions. This information source is used by most insurers to report and check the claims history of a home. Information on past claims and damages may also be used

by insurers to set homeowners insurance premiums for the property, so it is important buyers make sure insurers are using accurate information to determine rates.

"There are many instances in which the seller has not owned or lived in the home for seven years, and so may not be aware of all claims filed during that period," Acting Commissioner Altman said. "Home sellers also benefit from having this report to ensure proper disclosure and avoid claims of fraud, negligent misrepresentation, or breach of contract, and to make certain the information is accurate."

Only the owner of a property can order a CLUE report, so a homebuyer must ask the seller to get this report. Consumers get one free report a year under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

A homeowner can request a report at personalreports.lexisnexis.com, or by calling 1-866-312-8076. It takes seven to 10 days for a report to arrive by mail; three days by email.

Acting Insurance Commissioner Shares Flood Coverage Options

Flood insurance is on many people's minds in the aftermath of significant flood damage in Florida and Texas from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. Initial reports from Texas say that fewer than 20 percent of homes damaged by Hurricane Harvey are covered by flood insurance.

Acting Commissioner Altman discussed this important issue, and the department's support for private flood coverage to be included in the reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), now being debated in Congress, at a public meeting in Lewisburg. President Trump recently signed a bill that included a short-term reauthorization of the program through December 2017.

Private flood insurance is a viable option for many Pennsylvania homeowners, and in many cases can be considerably less expensive than a comparable plan from NFIP.

Acting Commissioner Altman also encouraged homeowners who live outside of Special Flood Hazard Areas, where mortgage lenders often require flood insurance, to think about getting this coverage. Many of the homes in the Houston area damaged by Harvey were not in areas where flood coverage was required. Two floods in Pennsylvania over the past year, in Centre and Dauphin counties, occurred outside of SFHAs due to unusual heavy rain storms. These floods damaged scores of homes and businesses, and most did not have flood coverage.

Information on flood insurance, both through the NFIP and the private market, is available at www.insurance.pa.gov, by clicking on the Flood icon under Insurance Coverage Resources or by clicking [here](#).



Acting Commissioner Altman joins NeighborWorks Northeastern Pennsylvania on August 29 to provide information to potential homebuyers on how to find the claims history for a potential home before making a purchase.

Insurance Department Releases Brochure Detailing Options for Substance Use Disorder Coverage

Governor Wolf has made battling the opioid crisis a top priority of his administration. As part of this effort, the Insurance Department produced a brochure to help people understand how their coverage can impact what type of benefits are available for substance use disorder (SUD) treatment.

The department first made the brochure available at a public meeting held by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Greensburg, one of seven meetings held by the diocese to address the opioid crisis in the four counties the diocese encompasses: Westmoreland, Indiana, Fayette, and Armstrong.

About 250 people attended the meeting at Our Lady of Grace Parish in Greensburg, which diocesan officials say was roughly the turnout for each of the meetings. Last year, 319 people died of opioid overdoses in the diocese.

The Insurance Department's brochure outlines that government coverage through Medicaid, also

called Medical Assistance, or CHIP, includes SUD coverage. However, Medicare offers coverage depending on the type of treatment the consumer needs. In each case, consumers should check with their program to get details.

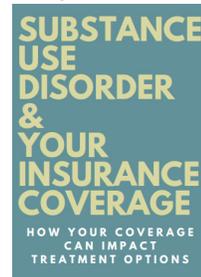
Consumers who bought individual health insurance through Healthcare.gov, or directly through an insurance company or agent, have SUD coverage, as long as the plan complies with the Affordable Care Act.

Individuals who have coverage through an employer are guaranteed coverage under Pennsylvania law, if the employer buys commercial insurance coverage. However, some companies, especially larger ones, are self-insured, meaning the company pays the insurance claims itself, even though it may hire a third party to handle the paper work. Self-insured plans are regulated by federal, not state, law, and are not required to provide SUD coverage, though many do. Consumers who

get coverage through employers should talk to their human resources department about their health plan.

The brochure also reminds consumers that federal and state law requires health plans that provide SUD coverage to do so at parity with medical and surgical coverage. This means that issues such as the number of outpatient visits covered; out-of-pocket costs such as co-pays, deductibles, and co-insurance; prior authorization requirements; provider networks and payment for out-of-network services; and criteria for determining medical necessity; must be the same for SUD treatment, as for medical and surgical care.

To view and print the brochure, click the image below.



Recent Press Releases

- September 6, 2017 - Wolf Administration Testifies Before U.S. Senate Committee on Bipartisan Fixes to Strengthen ACA
- August 31, 2017 - Acting Insurance Commissioner Stresses Need for Affordable Flood Insurance Options for Consumers
- August 29, 2017 - Insurance Department Urges Homebuyers to 'Get a Clue,' Request Property's Claims History
- August 22, 2017 - Insurance Department Offers Information on Health Insurance Options for College Students
- August 10, 2017 - Insurance Commissioner Announces More Than \$40M in Restitution to Pennsylvania Consumers This Year
- August 9, 2017 - Wolf Administration and Carlisle School Leaders Team Up To Remind Parents About Back-To-School Vaccines
- August 3, 2017 - Insurance Department Releases Brochure Outlining Coverage Options for Substance Use Disorder Treatment
- July 31, 2017 - Insurance Commissioner in Letter to Federal HHS Secretary Price: Costs Will Increase if Stability Not Achieved
- July 28, 2017 - Commissioner Reduces Required Notification and Approval of Fund Transfers and Investments by Highmark
- July 25, 2017 - Insurance Commissioner Testifies Before U.S. House Dems on Immediate Need for Stability to Strengthen ACA