

Quarterly Monitoring Report

Georgia Postpartum Extension
1115 Demonstration in Georgia

Demonstration Year 1

Quarter 1: April 16, 2021 – June 30, 2021

Submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid
Services

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I. Background

Historical Context

In 2019, the Georgia General Assembly (GGA) passed House Resolution 589 to create the House Study Committee on Maternal Mortality. This Committee, which included seven members of the House, held five public meetings to gather information from maternal health experts, health care providers, and community organizations regarding potential strategies to address the state's high rate of maternal mortality. Between 2012-2015, data from the Georgia Department of Public Health Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC) estimate that 60% of maternal deaths in Georgia were deemed preventable. Based on these and other data, the Georgia MMRC recommended the implementation of case management to promote postpartum follow-up for high-risk women with chronic health conditions and pregnancy complications, extension of health insurance coverage for one year postpartum, and promotion of pregnancy spacing through increased access to family planning and contraception services postpartum. In recognition of the need to collaborate within the state, the GGA worked with Georgia's Department of Community Health (DCH) and Georgia's Department of Public Health (DPH) to craft and advocate for the passage of H.B. 1114 (Postpartum Medicaid Extension) during the 2020 legislative session. The second provision in this legislation authorized the extension of Medicaid coverage postpartum through 180 days.

Through the Georgia Postpartum Extension, DCH seeks to extend access to quality care and ensure continuity of care and care coordination during the postpartum period, with the ultimate goal of reducing rates of severe maternal morbidity and mortality in the State.

Overview of the Georgia Postpartum Extension

On April 16, 2021, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved Georgia's Section 1115(a) demonstration project, *Georgia Postpartum Extension*. Implementation of the

project began statewide effective July 1, 2021 and will continue through March 31, 2026. This waiver will extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to women with incomes up to 220 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), from a previous period of 60 days to one hundred and eighty (180) days, or six months. Prior to the Georgia Postpartum Extension, DCH administered Georgia's Right from the Start Medicaid (RSM) Assistance to women with this income criteria throughout the woman's pregnancy and through a 60-day postpartum period. Georgia applied for the waiver in October 2020 in recognition of the comparatively high rate of maternal mortality in the state.

Goals of Georgia Postpartum Extension

Under the Georgia Postpartum Extension, DCH expects to achieve the following goals to improve maternal health in the State:

- Reduce maternal morbidity and mortality for Medicaid members in Georgia; and
- Support the long-term fiscal sustainability of the State's Medicaid program by maintaining fiscal balance.

By extending Medicaid coverage for postpartum women, DCH expects more women will attend their postpartum visit, access needed health care services and in turn, reduce the probability they will experience adverse outcomes such as severe maternal morbidity and mortality. DCH also expects these changes will lead to lower per capita Medicaid expenses in the postpartum period that will compare favorably to national measures.

Georgia Postpartum Extension Population Groups and Covered Services

Under the Georgia Postpartum Extension, postpartum coverage will be extended from 60 days to six months for the following eligibility groups:

- Women enrolled in any Medicaid eligibility group who have household income up to 220% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (with up to 5% income disregard) and whose

60-day postpartum period is ending; and

- Women who are within the six-month postpartum period, were not enrolled in Georgia Medicaid at delivery, have household income up to 220% FPL (with up to 5% income disregard), and who meet all other Medicaid eligibility criteria.

Beneficiaries eligible for the Georgia Postpartum Extension will receive full Medicaid coverage (i.e., all medically necessary covered Medicaid state plan benefits). Medicaid enrollees are made aware of these benefits through their Care Management Organizations (CMOs) in a “Welcome to Medicaid” package. Additionally, beneficiaries will be eligible to receive Resource Mother (RM) Outreach, a program which provides peer services in coordination with a nurse case manager to provide a range of paraprofessional and case management services to beneficiaries and their families. Resource Mothers have previously been available to women in the Interpregnancy Care (IPC) and Resource Mothers only components of the pre-existing Section 1115 waiver, Planning for Healthy Babies (P4HB), which has been approved by CMS through 2029. These components apply to women who recently delivered a very low birth weight (VLBW) infant. Resource Mothers offer support to mothers and provide them with information on parenting, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles, in addition to other services, such as assistance in dealing with personal and social problems, provision of supportive counseling, or serving as a liaison for health care and social services. Beneficiaries will not be subject to cost-sharing, copayments, or coinsurance for any Medicaid benefit provided under the Georgia Postpartum Extension.

Georgia Postpartum Extension Eligibility and Delivery System

Beneficiaries eligible for the Georgia Postpartum Extension will receive all eligible benefits for the six-month postpartum period, regardless of the point in their postpartum period they enroll in the program. Beneficiaries will remain enrolled regardless of changes in income throughout

the duration of the six-month postpartum period. Beneficiaries will seamlessly transition into this program as they did under the 60-day postpartum benefit period. In the interest of equity, DCH extended a “transition period” to mothers whose 60-day postpartum benefits prior to the Georgia Postpartum Extension would have expired in the month prior (June 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021) to the July 1, 2021 effective date. For instance, mothers with an April 15, 2021 delivery would be eligible for extended postpartum coverage offered through the Georgia Postpartum Extension.

Consistent with the structure of RSM, DCH will employ a managed care delivery system to provide services to all eligible beneficiaries under the Georgia Postpartum Extension, with the exception of beneficiaries receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Assignment and/or selection of a CMO will follow the same process utilized by DCH outside of this demonstration. Beneficiaries not enrolled in a CMO upon program enrollment will be automatically enrolled in one, and will have a 90-day window to switch to a different plan if they so choose. Beneficiaries receiving SSI will receive services through a fee-for-service delivery system as they currently do in the P4HB and other Medicaid programs.

II. Pre-Implementation Activities

Identifying Postpartum Extension Members

It is estimated that there would be an average monthly enrollment of 12,630 women in the first demonstration year (DY1) and 15,501 in DY5. The enrollment estimates for the first year reflected that some individuals that lost coverage prior to July 1, 2021, would re-enroll for coverage under the extended postpartum period. For example, 10% of January 2021 deliveries would re-enroll July 2021 and higher percentages of subsequent 2021 deliveries would re-enroll with 100% of April 2021 deliveries receiving extended coverage. DCH will utilize internal analytic files to identify eligible women within their 61st – 180th postpartum day window.

Communication Activities

DCH engaged in various forms of communication to inform CMOs, staff, providers, beneficiaries, and the general public about the Georgia Postpartum Extension. On April 21, 2021, a press release by Governor Brian P. Kemp and DCH announced the approval of Georgia's Postpartum Extension by CMS -it reads:

*CMS Approves Georgia's Postpartum Medicaid Extension for New Mothers
APRIL 21, 2021*

Atlanta, GA - Today, Governor Brian P. Kemp and the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) announced the state's "Georgia Postpartum Extension" section 1115 demonstration waiver has been approved by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), extending Medicaid state plan benefits from 60 days to six months to postpartum women with incomes up to 220 percent of the federal poverty level.

"Working with members of the General Assembly during the 2020 legislative session, I was thrilled to sign into law House Bill 1114 which authorizes the extension of Medicaid coverage for six months to provide for postpartum care in our continued fight to decrease maternal mortality," said Governor Brian P. Kemp. "We recognize that maternal deaths are a serious public health concern, and the approval of the Georgia Postpartum Extension waiver underscores Georgia's commitment to continually enhance the level of care for new mothers in the Peach State."

With the approval of the waiver, which was initially submitted in December 2020, Georgia becomes just one of three states to lengthen coverage of Medicaid benefits to postpartum women. Through the continuity of this coverage, Georgia aims to advance its efforts in improving the health of mothers in Georgia, as well as reduce the rate of maternal mortality and morbidity in the state by further addressing the care for women postpartum.

"We are so pleased that the Georgia Postpartum Extension waiver extension has been approved, and we would like to thank our federal partners for their continuous engagement throughout the application process and for their expeditious approval," said DCH Commissioner Frank Berry. "I'd like to thank our Medicaid team at DCH as well for their exceptional work in advancing this important waiver. We view this as a significant steppingstone in helping to ensure that postpartum women throughout Georgia can continue receiving the best care possible."

Additionally, to announce the Postpartum Extension, DCH released a banner message via the Georgia Medicaid Management Information System (GAMMIS), the primary web portal for Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids, and all related waiver programs administered by DCH, for Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids providers. The banner message reads:

*“Dear Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids Providers:
Effective July 1, 2021 postpartum coverage for pregnant women increased from 60 days (2 months) to 180 days (6 months) for Medicaid eligible postpartum women with incomes up to 220% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The extension of postpartum coverage will apply to eligible women regardless of the Medicaid aid category they are enrolled in. This includes but is not limited to: Low Income Medicaid (104), Pregnant Women Medicaid (170), and SSI Medicaid (300s).
Eligibility for postpartum services will continue throughout the entire postpartum period, regardless of a change in income, ensuring continuity of coverage. Prior to the end of the 6-month postpartum period, a redetermination review will be conducted for each beneficiary to identify any other categories of eligibility.”*

These pre-implementation activities assisted in the preparation for July 1, 2021 implementation of Georgia’s Medicaid Postpartum Extension project.