



Florida Legal Services

For more information, contact:

Betsy Couch

Moore Consulting Group

(850) 224-0174 or (850) 509-3767

betsyc@moore-pr.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Health Care Advocate Groups Launch Helpline for Medicaid Patients
Who Have Been Denied Prescription Drug Coverage**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (September 1, 2005)— Today, Florida Legal Services and health care advocates, physicians and Medicaid recipients from around the state launched a new, toll-free Helpline to protect the health of Florida’s most vulnerable citizens. The Florida Medicaid Prescription Drug Access Helpline expects to assist the thousands of individuals with serious disabilities and illnesses. Medicaid patients are encouraged to call 1-800-436-6001 if Medicaid has denied their prescription drug coverage.

“We need to ensure that patients come first with the new changes to Florida’s Medicaid program,” said Anne Swerlick, Deputy Director, Florida Legal Services. “This toll-free Helpline will make certain they have the necessary resources and information to navigate through the system to get their prescribed medications.”

The Medicaid program was designed to provide quality health care to nearly 2.2 million Floridians; however, new changes to the preferred drug list will deny access to the medications that, in many cases, the physician prescribes as the best treatment for optimal care.

The Helpline offers timely information about the new prior authorization requirements, advice and assistance to patients who need help getting coverage for their Medicaid prescriptions. If Medicaid does not cover a medication prescribed by a health care provider, Medicaid patients have the right to appeal this decision. This includes the right to an immediate, temporary supply of medicine if Medicaid (or the Medicaid HMO) covered the same prescription the previous month, and the right to ongoing prescription coverage through the appeal process.

-more-

MEDICAID HELPLINE/ ADD ONE

“The Helpline is also a service to assist when Medicaid is not responding to a physician’s request for coverage of a prescription,” said Sue Homant, executive director of NAMI Florida. “Medicaid is required to respond to the request within 24 hours to ensure that our sickest patients get the medicines they need to prevent potentially life-threatening conditions and to allow them to continue their recovery.”

Florida Legal Services, Inc. is a non-profit organization that provides civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and their families throughout Florida. For more information about Florida Legal Services, please call Anne Swerlick at (850) 385-7900 or visit www.floridalegal.org.

###