



Traditional Healthcare SPA

Information to Prepare for upcoming meeting with CMS



Health & Human Services



Traditional Healthcare Services Background Information

- We have been working together for the last 11 months on establishing Medicaid coverage for traditional healthcare services.
- 4 states have been approved for 1115 Demonstration Waivers to cover Traditional Healthcare Services.

How we have been working together.

- Surveyed tribal partners on what traditional healthcare services they'd like to see covered by ND Medicaid.
- Explored the Traditional Healthcare Services Waiver option.
- Explored pursuing a State Plan Amendment (SPA).
- Decided as a group that the easiest and quickest path forward to coverage for Traditional Healthcare Services would be through pursuing a SPA.
- SPA was drafted under preventative services and used the same language as 1115 Demonstration Waivers approvals.
- SPA submitted with effective date of 7/1/2025.
- Formed a small work group.
- Began to define services, service length, and traditional healthcare providers.

Why we chose SPA option

- States that have the 1115 Demonstration Waiver have been working on this for 10 years and are still not operational.
- SPA would be approved within a period of 3-6 months vs 1115 Demonstration Waiver, taking several years.
- Tribal partners wanted less “red tape” and to provide services already allowed in their IHS contracts.
- Permanent and sustainable. Not subject to future disapproval or renewal requests.
- Reduces the administrative burden and costs. North Dakota does not have any other Section 1115 waivers, and using a State Plan Amendment (SPA) would allow funds to be directed toward service delivery rather than administrative expenses.
- No monitoring that may be potentially invasive to traditional healing practices

CMS Update



CMS has signaled they plan to disapprove our SPA for Traditional Healthcare Services.



We have requested time for CMS to meet with our tribes and tribal partners later this month.

Traditional Healthcare Practices CMS Meeting

- Meeting scheduled with CMS on 6/25/25 at 12pm CT. This is our tribal partners' opportunity to:
 - Encourage CMS to approve the SPA
 - Ask CMS Questions
- Share the [meeting link](#) with anyone you feel would be helpful in meeting with CMS on the submitted SPA.
- Contact mrunchels@nd.gov with any questions or comments. I am available to provide information to your leadership or any other identified partners.



SPA vs 1115 Demonstration

Modifying Medicaid Coverage

- Medicaid is a joint federal and state program
 - Takes state submission and CMS approval to modify Medicaid.
- States can modify Medicaid through:
 - **State Plan Amendments (SPAs)**
 - **Section 1115 Waivers**
 - **Other methods such as 1915b and 1915c waivers, alternative benefit plans**

What is a State Plan Amendment (SPA)?

- A permanent change to a state's Medicaid plan
- Formal request to update Medicaid implementation
- Can:
 - add new eligibility groups
 - Add new services
 - change how benefits are delivered

What is a Section 1115 Waiver

- A temporary demonstration project
- Allows flexibility beyond federal Medicaid rules
- Requires federal approval and regular evaluation
- Used to:
 - Test new delivery systems
 - Pilot innovative approaches

Key Differences

Feature	SPA	Section 1115 Waiver
Permanence	Permanent	Temporary
Purpose	Modify Medicaid plan	Test new approaches
Scope	Broader	Targeted
Federal Approval	Required (no expiration)	Required (expires/renews)
Reporting	Minimal	Rigorous monitoring & evaluation
Approval timeframe	CMS has 90 calendar days to decide	No required timeframe-can take years.
Fiscal considerations	No target, but must estimate costs.	Must demonstrate budget neutrality.

Examples

- SPA:
 - Expanding coverage to a new income group
 - Adding dental or vision benefits
- Section 1115 Waiver:
 - ND does not have any.
 - Other states-IMD, traditional healthcare etc.

Additional Resources

- [Medi-Cal State Plan Amendments and Waivers Comparison Chart](#)
- [State Plan Amendments v. Section 1115 Waiver](#)
- [All Tribes Consultation Webinar on Medicaid Coverage of Traditional Health Care Practices](#)
- IHS contract language (The contractor is permitted to employ traditional healthcare practices and practitioners and does so from time to time as circumstances warrant, but per U.S.C. § 1680u as amended, the United States is not liable for any provision of traditional health care practices that results in damage, injury, or death to a patient.)