



# **Medically Dependent Children Program Monitoring Report**

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**As Required by  
Texas Government Code, Section  
531.06021**

**Texas Health and Human Services  
March 2023**



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

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## Executive Summary

Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) submits the Medically Dependent Children Program (MDCP) monitoring report in compliance with Texas Government Code, Section 531.06021. This section requires HHSC to provide a report containing, for the most recent state fiscal quarter, information and data related to access to care for Medicaid recipients receiving benefits under the MDCP waiver program.

This report contains information for fiscal year 2023, quarter two.

### **Enrollment in the Medicaid Buy-in for Children (MBIC) program**

HHSC is required to provide enrollment numbers for individuals participating in MBIC. The data included in this report indicates 803 unduplicated individuals were enrolled in MBIC for fiscal year 2023, quarter two.

### **Requests relating to interest list placements**

Section 531.06021 sets forth processes for individuals who are enrolled in MDCP but found ineligible for the program. HHSC implemented this provision on December 14, 2020.

Under this process, HHSC received eight requests for interest list placement through the end of quarter two of fiscal year 2023.

### **Use of the MDCP escalation helpline**

[Texas Government Code, Section 533.00253](#) requires HHSC to implement an escalation helpline for recipients in MDCP and the Deaf-Blind with Multiple Disabilities (DBMD) waiver program. Information on use of the helpline is included in this report.

## **Use of, requests for, and outcomes of the external medical review procedure**

[Texas Government Code, Section 531.024164](#) requires HHSC to implement a process for review of managed care organization (MCO) or dental maintenance organization (DMO) benefit denials or reductions and medical necessity eligibility denials by an Independent Review Organization (IRO). To implement this initiative, HHSC must contract with IROs to conduct the External Medical Review (EMR). IROs began conducting EMRs effective May 1, 2022.

## **Complaints relating to the MDCP waiver program, categorized by disposition**

For fiscal year 2023 quarter two the Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Ombudsman received eight complaints from individuals in MDCP that have been resolved at the time of this report. The agency data is included by the resolution, categories, and subcategories of the complaints.

# 1. Introduction

This report contains information and data related to access to care for Medicaid recipients receiving benefits under the MDCP waiver including:

- Enrollment in the MBIC program;
- Requests relating to interest list placements under a provision in Section 531.06021;
- Use of the Medicaid escalation helpline;
- Use of, requests for, and outcomes of the EMR procedure; and
- Complaints relating to the MDCP waiver program, categorized by disposition.

## 2. Background

On November 1, 2016, HHSC implemented the State of Texas Access Reform (STAR) Kids program at which time, MDCP enrollees began receiving their acute care and long-term services and supports (LTSS) through STAR Kids. STAR Kids provides all medically necessary or functionally necessary Medicaid services and benefits of the MDCP waiver to eligible individuals.

MDCP provides services to support families caring for children and young adults age 20 and younger who are medically dependent and to encourage de-institutionalization of children and young adults who reside in nursing facilities.

MDCP provides respite, flexible family support services, minor home modifications, adaptive aids, transition assistance services, employment assistance, supported employment, and financial management services through STAR Kids and STAR Health MCOs.

### 3. Medicaid Buy-In for Children Enrollment

The MBIC program offers low-cost Medicaid services to children with disabilities in families who exceed Medicaid financial eligibility criteria. Eligibility for MBIC includes:

- Age 18 and younger
- Have a disability
- Are a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen living in Texas

MBIC provides the same services, both acute and LTSS, as Medicaid. Unlike traditional Medicaid eligibility, MBIC may require monthly payments. The requirement and amount vary based on income or if a member has other insurance.

The table below includes the monthly counts for enrollment in the MBIC program for fiscal year 2023, quarter two, as well as an unduplicated count of clients for the same time period. The unduplicated number represents the number of individuals served over the reporting period.

**Table 1. Number of Individuals Eligible for MBIC by Month for Fiscal Year 2023 Quarter Two and Unduplicated Number of Individuals Eligible for Fiscal Year 2023 Quarter Two**

<b>Month/Year</b>	<b>MBIC Eligible Individuals</b>
<b>December 2022</b>	770
<b>January 2023</b>	777
<b>February 2023</b>	786
<b>Unduplicated</b>	803

Data source: HHSC Office of Data, Analytics and Performance

## 4. Interest List Placement

Section 531.06021 sets forth processes for individuals (referred to as members) who are enrolled in MDCP but subsequently found ineligible for the program. A member may lose eligibility due to medical necessity. If a member lost eligibility because of medical necessity, the member can request to be placed in the first position on the MDCP interest list. The member can also request to use the original date they applied for the MDCP interest list as the interest list placement date for an existing waiver interest list. If a member lost MDCP eligibility due to a denial of medical necessity or because they have exceeded the age requirement for the program, the member can request to use the date they applied for the MDCP interest list as the date of interest list placement for any interest list on which the individual currently included. HHSC implemented this provision on December 14, 2020.

Fiscal year 2023, through quarter two, HHSC has received a total of eight requests for first position placement on the MDCP interest list.

Waiver release slots are offered on a first-come-first-served basis, based on legislative funding allotted to the program. Members electing first position are informed they will be reassessed as MDCP slots become available.



## 5. MDCP/DBMD Escalation Helpline

Texas Government Code, Section 533.00253 requires HHSC to implement a MDCP/DBMD Escalation Helpline for recipients in the MDCP and DBMD waiver programs.

The helpline was implemented in a phased approach. On October 15, 2020, the helpline became available Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. On December 1, 2020, the helpline expanded its hours to Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m.

**Table 2: Total Number of Inquiries and Complaints Received by the MDCP/DBMD Escalation Helpline by Month for Fiscal Year 2023, Quarter Two**

Month/Year	Complaints	Inquiries
December 2022	0	72
January 2023	5	51
February 2023	4	60
<b>Total</b>	9	183

The helpline received 192 total contacts for fiscal year 2023, quarter two (nine complaints and 183 inquiries). This is an increase of 68 contacts from the previous quarter, during which HHSC received 124 contacts. Of the 192 total contacts, 33 contacts were specific to MDCP services (25 Member enrollment, 3 Access to Care, 3 Policy/Procedures, 1 Claims/Payment, and 1 Member Health and Safety). This was an increase of 13 MDCP contacts from the 20 MDCP contacts for fiscal year 2023, quarter one. There was no trend found regarding the increase of contacts specific to MDCP.

Complaints are contractually defined as an expression of dissatisfaction expressed by a complainant, orally or in writing to the MCO, about any matter related to the MCO other than an Adverse Benefit Determination. Inquiries are defined as a request by a consumer (member or provider) for information about HHS programs or services.

Table 3 depicts the total number of complaints and inquiries by category and subcategory for the Escalation Helpline.

**Table 3: Total Number of Complaints and Inquiries by Category and Subcategory Received and Resolved by Escalation Helpline in Fiscal Year 2023, Quarter Two**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Sub-Category</b>	<b>Number of Complaints</b>	<b>Number of Inquiries</b>
<b>Access to Care</b>	Benefit Issues	0	6
<b>Access to Care</b>	Denial of Authorization of Care	0	1
<b>Access to Care</b>	Durable Medical Equipment	0	2
<b>Access to Care</b>	Enrollment/Cancellation/Renewal of Enrollee	0	17
<b>Access to Care</b>	Ineffective Communication/Guidance	0	1
<b>Access to Care</b>	System Accessibility/Availability	0	2
<b>Claims/Payment</b>	Balance Billing	0	1
<b>Claims/Payment</b>	Prior Authorization / Pre-Certification Issues	1	1
<b>Member Enrollment</b>	Access to care	1	2
<b>Member Enrollment</b>	Benefit Issues	3	128
<b>Member Enrollment</b>	Enrollment/Cancellation/Renewal	2	11
<b>Member Enrollment</b>	Interest List	0	1
<b>Member Enrollment</b>	Member Enrollment Issues	1	0
<b>Member Enrollment</b>	System Accessibility/Availability	0	1
<b>Member Health and Safety</b>	Durable Medical Equipment	1	0
<b>Non-Medicaid Services</b>	Member Enrollment Issues	0	1
<b>Policies/Procedures</b>	Durable Medical Equipment	0	2
<b>Policies/Procedures</b>	Health Information Requests	0	4
<b>Prescription Services</b>	Delay of Medically Necessary Treatment	0	1
<b>Prescription Services</b>	Health Coverage/CoPay Limits	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>183</b>

Current call volume does not support a 24/7 implementation. Staff are on call between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. Monday through Friday, including holidays, and 24-hours a day on weekends. As required, the helpline staff return voice messages no later than two hours after receiving the call during standard business hours; and return a telephone call not later than four hours after receiving the voice message during evenings and weekends.

HHSC will continue to review helpline call data to determine the feasibility of expanding the helpline to other Medicaid programs that serve medically fragile children and young adults, as well as extending the hours to 24/7.

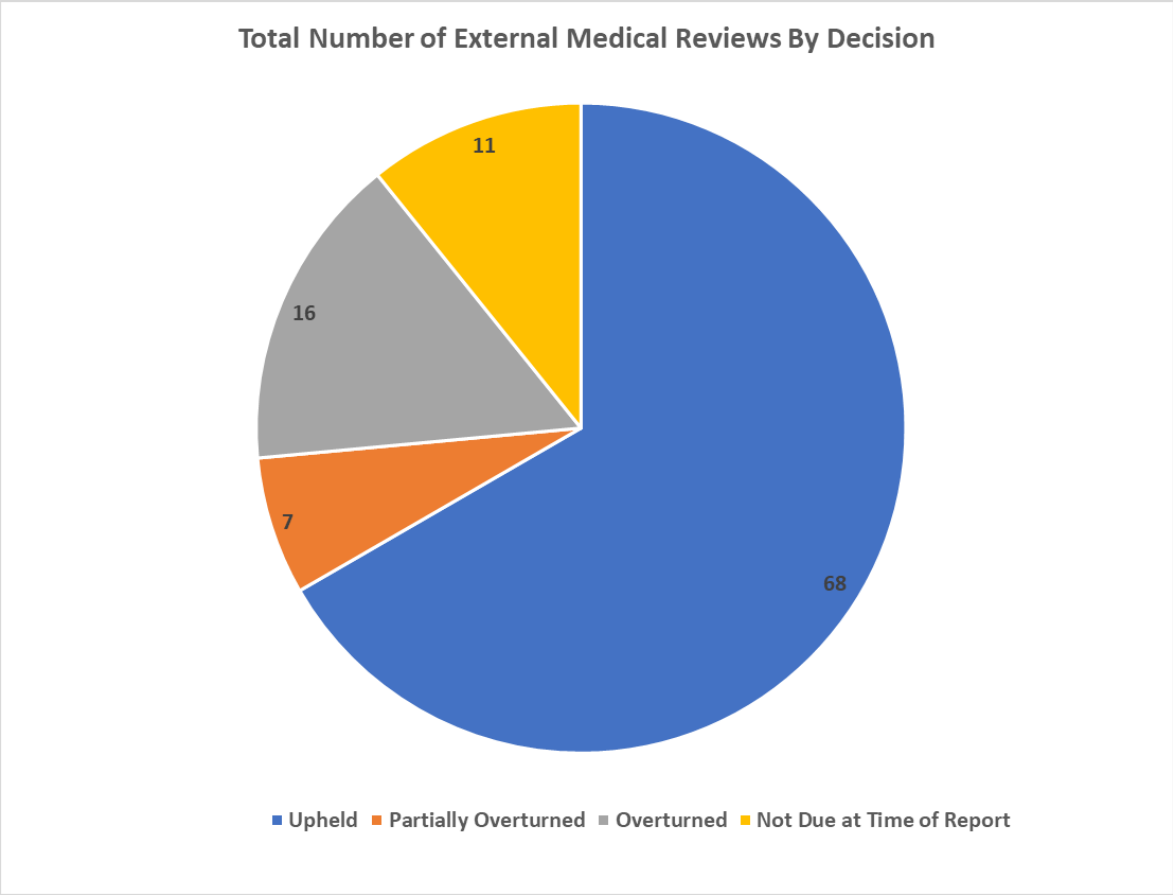
## 6. External Medical Review

Section 531.024164 requires HHSC to implement a process for review of MCO or DMO benefit denials or reductions. To implement this initiative, HHSC must contract with IROs to conduct the EMRs. HHSC is using an open enrollment process to contract with IROs which meet specified criteria. MCO and DMO benefit denials and service reductions subject to the EMR process implemented May 1, 2022.

Contracted IROs must provide objective, unbiased medical necessity determinations. The determinations must be conducted by clinical staff with education and practice in the same or similar practice area as the procedure for which an independent determination of medical necessity is sought in accordance with applicable state law and rules. The IRO must also be overseen by a medical director. The medical director must be a physician licensed in Texas and employ, or be able to consult with, staff experienced in providing private duty nursing services and LTSS.

The HHSC EMR Intake Team received 103 EMR requests for fiscal year 2023, quarter two. One EMR request was withdrawn prior to IRO assignment. Of the remaining 102 EMRs requested: 68 decisions were upheld, 16 decisions were overturned, seven decisions were partially overturned, 11 decisions were not due at the time of this report. Ten EMR requests were from MDCP Members.

**Image 1: Total Number of External Medical Reviews By Decision Received Fiscal Year 2023, Quarter Two**



## **7. Complaints Relating to the MDCP Waiver Program**

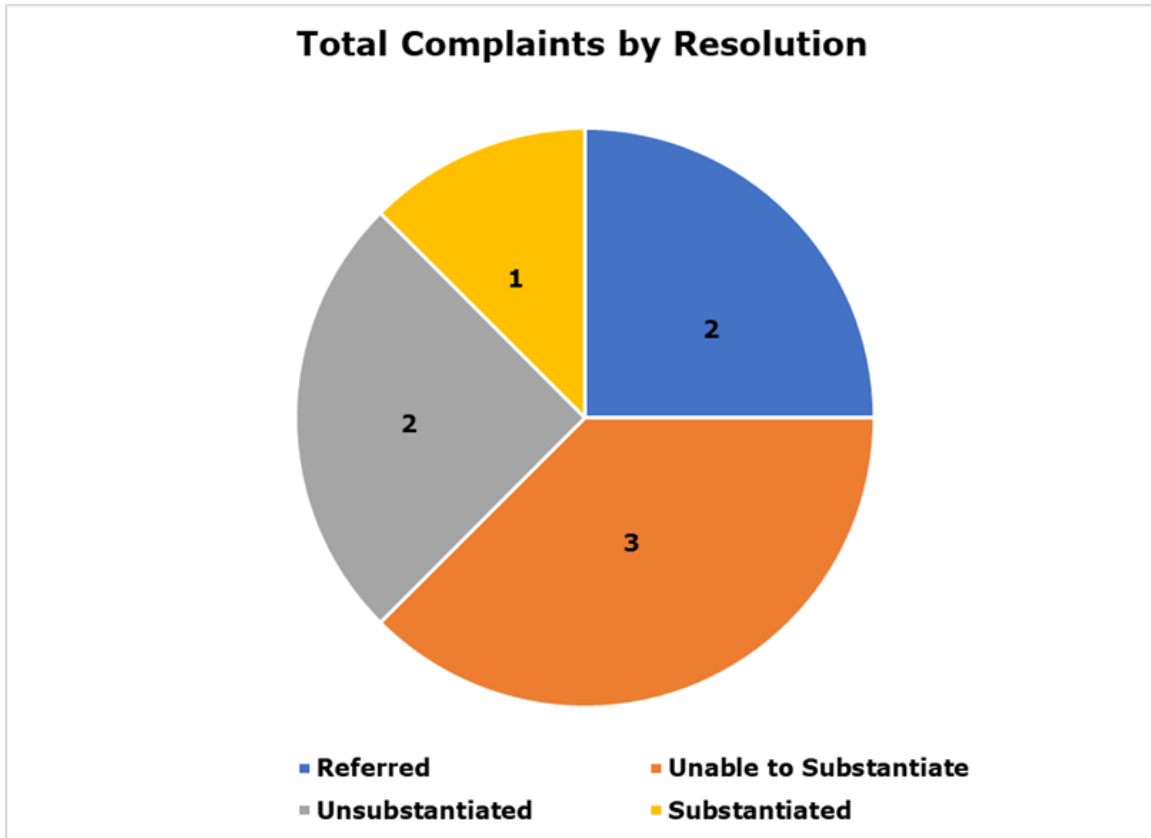
The HHS Office of the Ombudsman was established in state law to have authority and responsibility for providing dispute resolution services, performing consumer protection and advocacy functions, and collecting data on inquiries and complaints.

For the Medicaid managed care programs, a specialized team of Ombudsman staff are authorized by statute to work with HHSC Medicaid program staff, MCOs, and health care providers on behalf of consumers. Ombudsman staff educate consumers so they understand the concept of managed care, understand their rights under Medicaid, including grievance and appeal procedures, and are able to advocate for themselves. Ombudsman staff also collect and report statistical information on inquiries and complaints relating to MCOs by region and the Medicaid managed care program. Quarterly reports are posted on the agency's website.

The data included in this report includes all MDCP complaints received by the Ombudsman for fiscal year 2023, quarter two and resolved at the time of this report. MCOs are required to submit complaints data to HHSC. HHSC posts MCO self-reported data compiled with agency data on the HHSC website in a standalone report on complaints data.

The Ombudsman received and resolved eight total complaints related to MDCP. Image 2 shows of the complaints received and resolved, one was substantiated, two were unsubstantiated, three were unable to substantiate, and two were referred.

**Image 2: Total Number of Complaints by Resolution of Substantiated, Unsubstantiated, and Unable to Substantiate Received and Resolved by Ombudsman in Fiscal Year 2023, Quarter Two**



Ombudsman uses the following definitions for these terms:

- Substantiated – a complaint where research clearly indicates agency policy was violated or agency expectations were not met.
- Unable to Substantiate – a complaint where research does not clearly indicate if agency policy was violated or agency expectations were met.
- Unsubstantiated – a complaint where research clearly indicates agency policy was not violated or agency expectations were met.
- Referred - a complaint neither fully researched nor investigated because the complaint needs to be resolved elsewhere (a referral to another area to address the complaint).

The table below depicts the total number of complaints by category and subcategory.

**Table 4: Total Number of Complaints by Category and Subcategory Received and Resolved by Ombudsman in Fiscal Year 2023, Quarter Two**

<b>Complaint Category</b>	<b>Complaint Sub-Category</b>	<b>Number of Complaints</b>
<b>Access to Care</b>	Denial of Services	1
<b>Claims Payment</b>	Authorization Issue	1
<b>Member Enrollment</b>	Application Not Completed	1
<b>Member Enrollment</b>	Medicaid Eligibility/Recertification	3
<b>Prescription Services</b>	Prescription Services - Other	1
<b>Therapy</b>	Therapy - Denial of Authorization	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>8</b>



## List of Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full Name</b>
DBMD	Deaf Blind and Multiple Disabilities
DMO	Dental Maintenance Organization
EMR	External Medical Review
HHS	Health and Human Services
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
IRO	Independent Review Organization
LTSS	Long Term Services and Supports
MCO	Managed Care Organization
MDCP	Medically Dependent Children's Program
MBIC	Medicaid Buy In for Children
STAR	State of Texas Access Reform