



Medically Dependent Children Program Monitoring Report

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

**Texas Health and Human Services
September 2024**



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

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Executive Summary

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) submits the Medically Dependent Children Program (MDCP) monitoring report in compliance with [Texas Government Code, Section 531.06021](#), which requires HHSC to provide a biannual report containing information and data related to access to care for Medicaid recipients receiving benefits under the MDCP waiver program.

This report contains information for the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024.

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 601 unduplicated individuals were enrolled in MBIC during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024.

Requests relating to interest list placements

[Texas Government Code, Section 531.0601](#) sets forth processes for individuals who are enrolled in MDCP but subsequently found ineligible for the program. These processes allow for individuals to request different options related to placement on the waiver interest list for MDCP or another waiver. HHSC implemented this provision on December 14, 2020.

Under this process, HHSC received one request for interest list placement during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024.

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

During the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024, the Health and Human Services Office of the Ombudsman received 45 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 [Texas Government Code, Section 531.0601](#);
- 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

HHSC implemented the State of Texas Access Reform (STAR) Kids program on November 1, 2016, 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 through a managed care model.

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 during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024, 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 during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024 and Unduplicated Number of Individuals Eligible during the time period March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024

Month/Year	MBIC Eligible Individuals
March 2024	465
April 2024	470
May 2024	460
June 2024	457
July 2024	445
August 2024	445
Unduplicated Total	601

Data source: HHSC Office of Data, Analytics and Performance

4. Interest List Placement

[Texas Government Code, Section 531.0601](#) 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 denial of medical necessity. If a member lost eligibility because of denial 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 another 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 placed their name on the MDCP interest list as the date of interest list placement for any interest list on which the individual is currently included. HHSC implemented this provision on December 14, 2020.

During the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024, HHSC received a total of one request 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](#) required HHSC to implement a MDCP/DBMD Escalation Helpline for recipients in the MDCP and DBMD waiver programs and for it to be operational at all times, including evenings, weekend, and holidays.

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, Central Standard Time, the helpline expanded its hours to Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m.

Staff are also 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 by statute, 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.

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 2 shows the numbers of inquiry and complaint calls to the helpline between March 1 and August 31, 2024.

Table 2: Total Number of Complaints and Inquiries Received by the MDCP/DBMD Escalation Helpline by Month during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024

Month/Year	Complaints	Inquiries	Total Contacts
March 2024	0	100	100
April 2024	3	85	88
May 2024	0	78	78
June 2024	3	73	76
July 2024	5	97	102
August 2024	4	78	82
Total	15	511	526

The helpline received 526 total contacts during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024 (15 complaints and 511 inquiries). Of the 511 total contacts, 319 contacts were specific to MDCP services, including:

- 303 related to member enrollment;
- 11 related to access to care;
- Three related to customer service/quality; and
- Two related to policy/procedures.

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 during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024

Category	Sub-Category	Number of Complaints	Number of Inquiries	Total
Access to Care	Access to Care	0	1	1
Access to Care	Accessibility-Other	0	1	1
Access to Care	Durable Medical Equipment	0	2	2
Access to Care	Home Health	1	0	1
Access to Care	In Network: Specialty Care/Provider Access	0	2	2
Access to Care	Medical Necessity	0	1	1
Access to Care	Orthodontia	0	1	1
Access to Care	Rx Coverage/Copay/Limits	1	1	2
Claims/Payment	Orthodontia	0	1	1
Customer Service/Quality	Medical Necessity	0	1	1
Customer Service/Quality	Service Coordination	1	3	4
Member Enrollment	Benefit Issues	12	458	470
Member Enrollment	Identification Card Issue	0	1	1
Member Enrollment	Interest List	0	30	30
Member Enrollment	Member Enrollment Issues	0	2	2
Policies/Procedures	MDCP	0	3	3
Policies/Procedures	Medicaid Policy	0	1	1
Policies/Procedures	Medical Necessity	0	1	1
Provider Contracting	MDCP	0	1	1
Total	N/A	15	511	526

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.

6. External Medical Review

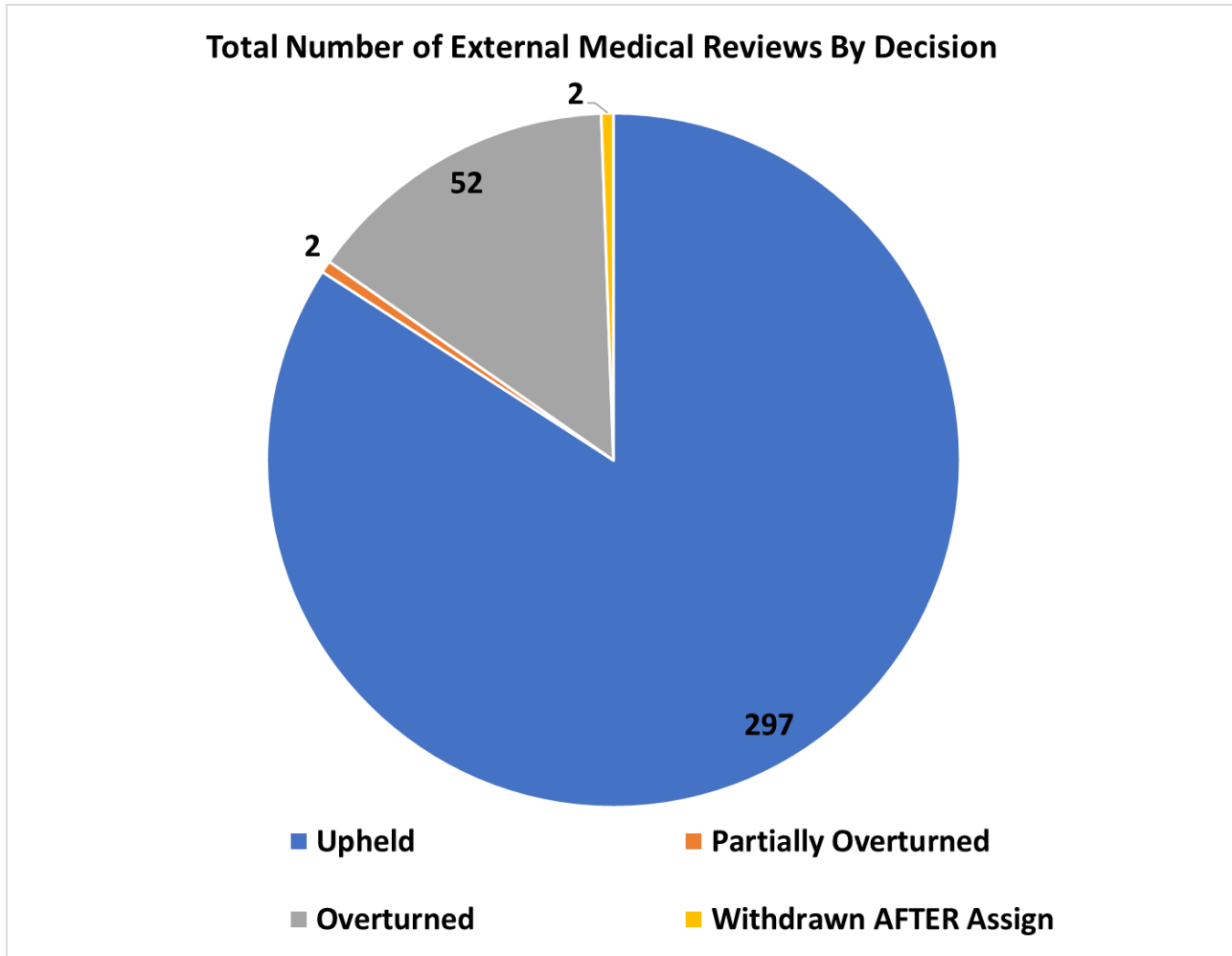
[Texas Government Code, Section 531.024164](#) requires HHSC to implement a process for review of MCO or DMO benefit denials or reductions. To implement this initiative, HHSC must contract with IROs to conduct the EMRs. HHSC is using an open enrollment process to contract with IROs which meet specified 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 353 EMR requests. The outcomes of the 353 EMRs requested are as follows:

- 297 decisions were upheld;
- 52 decisions were overturned;
- Two decisions were partially overturned; and
- Two EMRs were withdrawn after IRO assignment.

Figure 1: Total Number of External Medical Reviews by Decision Received during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024



7. Complaints Relating to the MDCP Waiver Program

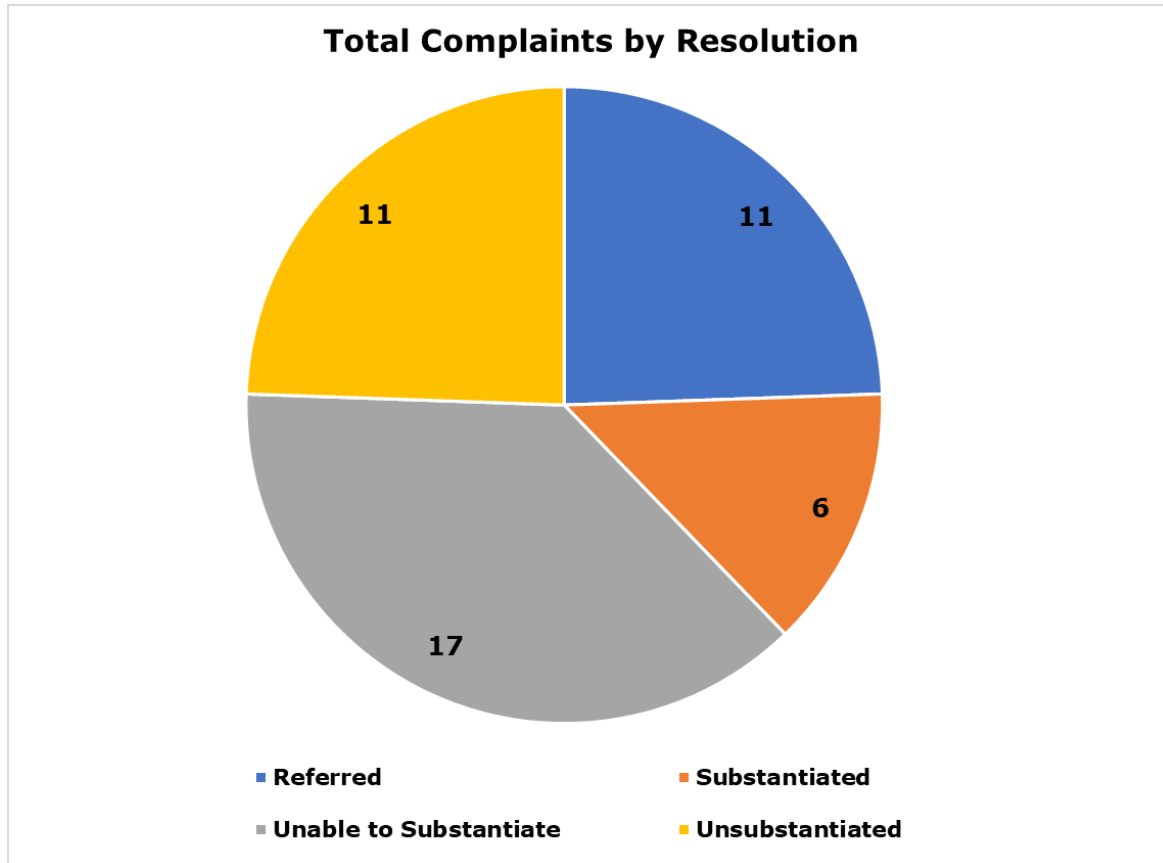
The HHS Office of the Ombudsman was established in state law to have authority and responsibility for providing dispute resolution services, performing consumer protection and advocacy functions, and collecting data on inquiries and complaints.

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 during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024 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 45 total complaints related to MDCP. Figure 2 shows complaints received and resolved; six were substantiated, 11 were unsubstantiated, 17 were unable to substantiate, and 11 were referred.

Figure 2: Total Number of Complaints by Resolution of Substantiated, Unsubstantiated, and Unable to Substantiate Received and Resolved by Ombudsman during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024



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 during the time period of March 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024

Complaint Category	Complaint Sub-Category	Number of Complaints
Access to Care	Access to DME	3
Access to Care	Access to Out-of-Network Provider	1
Access to Care	Denial of Services	1
Access to Care	Home Health	2
Access to Care	Reduction/Suspension/Termination of Services	1
Customer Service	Incorrect Information or Guidance	1
Member Enrollment	Application Not Completed	6
Member Enrollment	Application/Case Denied	14
Member Enrollment	Client Notice	1
Member Enrollment	Medicaid Eligibility/Recertification	3
Policies/Procedures	Fair Hearing/Appeals	2
Prescription Services	PS - Clinical Prior Authorization	1
Prescription Services	PS - Formulary	1
Prescription Services	PS - Other	1
Quality of Care	Access to Care Coordination	1
Quality of Care	Provider Treatment Inappropriate/Ineffective	1
Therapy	Therapy - Denial of Authorization	1
Transportation Issues	NEMT-Individual Transportation Participant claims	4
Total	N/A	45

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
DBMD	Deaf-Blind with Multiple Disabilities
DMO	Dental Maintenance Organization
EMR	External Medical Review
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
IRO	Independent Review Organization
LTSS	Long-Term Services and Supports
MBIC	Medicaid Buy-In for Children
MCO	Managed Care Organization
MDCP	Medically Dependent Children's Program