

49 ways to save Medicaid money

Governor's redesign team posts plans to cut \$2.85B from program

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ALBANY -- After spending weeks collecting ideas, Gov. [Andrew Cuomo's Medicaid Redesign Team](#) has posted on its website the 49 cost-saving proposals it's considering that have the greatest policy or fiscal impact.

The panel has been charged by the governor with identifying ways to cut state Medicaid spending by \$2.85 billion in the 2011-2012 fiscal year.

The proposals range from several options for recalibrating benefits and reimbursement rates to more targeted concepts -- such as limiting the prescriptions of opiates to cut down on fraud and abuse.

The proposals were posted on the website Tuesday so members can "score" each one according to a set of criteria that measures quality as well as cost savings -- short and long term -- and efficiency.

The formatted proposals "do not represent the [Department of Health's](#) recommendations, nor do they represent any final recommendations of the Medicaid Redesign Team," the website notes.

Nevertheless, the posting of the 49 ideas -- a subset of 274 proposals under consideration by the panel -- prompted at least one advocacy group to pounce, with a news release that suggested the Redesign Team was about to "hurt brain-damaged babies to cut (a) political budget deal."

The release from the consumer advocacy group the [Center for Justice and Democracy](#) assailed a proposal that would cap noneconomic damages for medical malpractice awards (the sum of \$250,000 is floated) and establish a [Neurologically Impaired Infant Medical Indemnity Fund](#) "that will provide payment for medical expenses of eligible children as well as repayment of the State's Medicaid lien where applicable." The fund could be established by an assessment on insurers' gross premiums.

The proposal was introduced by the [Greater New York Hospital Association](#), which has long pushed for measures that would reduce the cost of medical malpractice insurance.

Joanne Doroshow, the consumer group's executive director, said in an interview that it's "unbelievably outrageous that this was put in here. ... It's shocking, truly shocking."

The language of the proposal notes that its implementation would be both long term and complex because of the numerous interest groups involved, including from trial lawyers, patients-rights groups and more.

The center's reaction points up both the perils and the advantages of Cuomo's strategy in delegating Medicaid cuts to a broad panel: By putting everything on the table, the Redesign Team promotes buy-in by stakeholders but runs the risk of alarming those with objections to anything in view.

The Redesign Team's members have until Friday to "score" each proposal. The team is scheduled to meet Feb. 24 in Albany.