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Guam Wins National Award for Innovative Collaboration to Modernize Medicaid IT Systems & Operations

Oxon Hill, Md.— The National Association of Medicaid Directors (NAMD) today announced that Guam's Department of Public Health and Social Services has been awarded the 2025 Spotlight Award for their innovative tri-state and territorial collaboration to modernize its Medicaid IT system that is reshaping health care in the U.S. territory.

The award honors Guam's strategic partnership with West Virginia and the U.S. Virgin Islands to modernize its Medicaid Enterprise System through innovative leverage and reuse strategies. The initiative has secured over \$39 million in federal funding for fiscal years 2025-26 and successfully implemented critical pharmacy benefit management services that are already improving medication access for Guam's 43,000 Medicaid beneficiaries.

"This collaboration demonstrates the extraordinary outcomes that result when states and territories work together to re-use information technology systems and build on existing consultancy support," said **Kate McEvoy, Executive Director of NAMD**. "Guam's leadership shows how strategic partnerships can accelerate modernization, reduce costs, and most importantly, improve the lives of Medicaid members."

At the heart of the initiative is Guam's implementation of a Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM) solution through reuse of the U.S. Virgin Islands' existing contract, combined with project management partnership support from West Virginia. This approach enabled Guam to avoid lengthy procurement delays while providing access to critical medications, including specialty drugs that are difficult to source on-island.

"For years, we worked with a system that carried us through many seasons, but as healthcare needs grew more complex, we knew it was time to chart a new course." **said Theresa C. Arriola, Director of Guam's Department of Public Health and Social**

Services and Guam Medicaid Director. "Our mission was to create a better way to serve our community, being there when every moment matters. The results speak for themselves. Quicker access to medications, less time lost in paperwork, and a stronger sense of care. This is the change we promised, and it's here."

The collaboration was made possible by Guam's enactment of the Leverage and Reuse Law in July 2024, which empowered the territory to adopt and leverage contracts and systems from other jurisdictions. The partnership spans multiple modernization domains including eligibility and enrollment, interoperability, and organizational readiness. Through this collaboration, Guam successfully launched its new pharmacy benefit management system on September 1, 2025, and secured over \$39 million in federal funding for fiscal years 2025-26. The modernization effort has enabled the territory to navigate procurement timely and reduce administrative costs while implementing enhanced fraud detection and cost containment measures that streamline workflows and improve provider claim processing.

"This isn't just about upgrading systems, it's about shaping a future where our Medicaid program serves every person with dignity, speed, and reliability," said Arriola. "A third of our population depends on Medicaid, and when I think about what this modernization means, especially during times of crisis like natural disasters or health emergencies, I feel immense pride in what our team has achieved."

About NAMD's Spotlight Award

Guam's Medicaid program has been honored at the National Association of Medicaid Directors (NAMD) Conference in Washington, D.C., November 19th – 21st, receiving the prestigious Spotlight Award for exceptional leadership and innovation in Medicaid administration. NAMD is a national organization that represents state and territorial Medicaid leaders and provides a forum for collaboration, best practices, and advocacy to improve health care for millions of Americans. This recognition underscores Guam's commitment to delivering value through improved member experiences and the efficient use of taxpayer resources. The 2025 award specifically highlights Guam's groundbreaking initiatives that enhanced service delivery and set a benchmark for excellence in Medicaid programs nationwide. Receiving this honor at the NAMD Conference further amplifies Guam's role as a leader in driving meaningful change and ensuring better health outcomes for its community.

Also at the conference, Guam's Medicaid Director, Theresa Arriola, joined a distinguished panel alongside West Virginia Commissioner Cindy Beane and Ed Dolly, Deputy Director of the Data and Systems Group with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to

discuss maximizing the value of IT system investments through leverage and reuse. The session highlights how states and territories, including Guam and West Virginia, are collaborating to reuse proven technology solutions, accelerate modernization, and reduce costs. Panelists shared lessons learned from cross-state and territory partnerships, strategies for navigating procurement and legislative buy-in, and the importance of federal support from CMS. The discussion emphasizes the operational realities, governance structures, and key considerations for successful leverage and reuse, showcasing how innovative collaboration can drive efficiency and improve outcomes across Medicaid programs.

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