

Center for Children's Advocacy Senior Staff Attorney Bonnie Roswig has worked for years to improve the state's medical transportation for low income families. On June 2, 2017, Connecticut announced selection of a new provider.

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State Picks New Provider of Medical Rides for Medicaid Patients

Josh Kovner, June 2, 2017

In a move aimed at improving the quality of medical rides to sick children and adults on Medicaid, the state has begun negotiations with an Arizona-based contractor to take over a program that has been the subject of complaints from lawmakers and patient advocates.

Problems with the current transportation broker, LogistiCare, included cabs arriving with random passengers to pick up child cancer patients with suppressed immune systems, in violation of doctors' "no-shared ride" orders; and parents and children missing appointments or stranded for hours when the rides never showed up or were late. The complaints prompted the legislature last year to approve a new contract solicitation with expanded quality controls.

The state has selected Total Transit, Inc., of Glendale, AZ, and is working on an agreement, David Dearborn, spokesman for the Department of Social Services, said Friday.

Four companies bid on the revised contract, including Atlanta-based LogistiCare.

The three-year contract starts Jan. 1 and pays a total of \$23 million in administrative fees. The state pays millions more for the cost of the cab and van rides, which are provided by private companies. The social-services agency could not immediately provide the transportation costs for the last several years, or a projection of those costs under the new contract.

Dearborn said the administrative and transportation costs will be about the same with the new vendor as they had been under LogistiCare. The difference, he said, is that the new vendor will have a fixed amount to pay the cab companies and will be responsible for cost overruns.

The job of the transportation broker is to arrange and oversee cab, van and bus rides that take sick and disabled children and adults to non-emergency medical appointments, such as chemotherapy, dialysis and mental-health counseling. The company maintains a call center. More than 4 million rides a year are provided in Connecticut.

"Our concerns were the struggles of Medicaid patients -- parents and children stranded when rides came late or not at all, orders from medical-providers ignored," said Bonnie Roswig, a lawyer with the Center for Children's Advocacy in Hartford.

A company spokeswoman did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday afternoon. The company has vigorously defended its performance.

"While even one service deficiency is one too many, 99.97 percent of the 4.5 million rides provided annually occur without incident or complaint," said George Sousa, general manager in Connecticut. Advocates dispute that performance rate.

Roswig last year filed a civil-rights complaint against LogistiCare with the U.S. Department of Justice.

"We're happy the state went through a thoughtful process in picking a vendor committed to meeting the needs of the Medicaid population. We're hopeful the state is committed to providing appropriate oversight," Roswig said.

Meanwhile, LogistiCare will remain the transportation broker through the end of the year. The company received a one-year extension and will be paid up to \$7.495 million, with a performance bonus of up to \$356,000. LogistiCare was paid just under \$25 million by the state from 2012 through Dec. 31, 2016.

<http://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-new-contractor-for-medical-rides-0603-20170602-story.html>