Heike Johns:
Welcome to this month's edition of From the Director's Desk with Val Huhn, Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities. I'm Heike Johns, Learning and Development Coordinator for the Division and your host for this podcast. Today we're talking about Electronic Visit Verification. Val, can you tell us what this is?

Val Huhn:
EVV, or Electronic Visit Verification is something that we will be doing for the Department of Mental Health and actually all Medicaid Personal Care Services starting January 1st of 2020. Electronic Visit Verification was actually signed by Congress into law on December 13th of 2016 as part of the 21st century Cures Act. The Cures Act was designed to improve the quality of care provided to individuals to further research, enhance quality control, and strengthen mental health parity. There are a lot of really, really great things in The Cures Act. A portion of that Cures Act though requires the Electronic Visit Verification to be used for all Personal Care Services and all Home Health Care Services delivered under the Medicaid program. That is what we're here to talk to you about today.

Heike Johns:
Can you describe in more detail what is EVV?

Val Huhn:
EVV, Electronic Visit Verification, which we're now going to just call EVV, is a method of utilizing electronic technology to capture the point of service information related to the delivery of in-home service. Think of it like a, you get to someone's house, an individual is going to deliver services, so not the individual receiving the services, but an individual delivering the services could show up at someone's house, pick up a phone, dial a number to say, "I am here." Then when they leave, they pick up a phone and dial a number and say, "I am leaving.".

So we have an electronic record of when you arrived and when you left to perform service delivery. Of course you're going to include more information in that and the technology's come a long way, so there's a lot of options on how we collect that information from the person delivering the service to the individual. We could do that via a cell phone. We can do that through fixed devices, biometrics, a thumbprint scanner. There's a lot of different ways how you get that done. But at the end of the day, EVV is a way for the state and Medicaid, the federal government, to make sure we are getting the services delivered that we're paying for based on a time and a location.

Heike Johns:
What services require the use of EVV?

Val Huhn:
All personal care providers. So personal care services are going to be required to use EVV. And this is going to require those providers to be compliant by January 1st of 2020. Home health care service providers, which are not providers that we have under the Medicaid waiver, are going to be required to implement
EVV by January 1st of 2023. Personal care in Missouri has been utilizing EVV, we call the telephony, but they've had the option to voluntarily use EVV for a number of years now. So this is just making that a requirement and that's a federal requirement.

Heike Johns:
So what are the benefits of EVV?

Val Huhn:
It's a guarantee that that healthcare service that we've asked to be delivered is actually being delivered. So that's one of the benefits is that we know that person did show up to deliver that personal care service. And we know what a hardship it is on our individuals and services whenever those people don't show up to deliver those services. So it's a guarantee that that's happening and we know when it's not happening.

It also can enhance the efficiency and transparency of the services, and it keeps our direct care workers accountable and our provider agencies accountable. It reduces the amount of fraud and abuse that is in this system. And you can Google fraud and abuse personal care. You're going to find some stories about how so-and-so was on vacation in the Bahamas and managed to bill Medicaid five days that week. It does reduce that potential fraud. It also eliminates paper documents. It really does get us into the 21st century. And again, this is a relationship between the state as the payer of services and the provider of services. So really for individuals in services, it should not be very evident that it's happening.

Heike Johns:
So what's Missouri doing to implement EVV?

Val Huhn:
Again, like I said, Missouri has been a voluntary EVV state for a number of years now. The Missouri Department of Social Services, MO HealthNet division and Department of Health and Senior Services and the Department of Mental Health are pursuing it open vendor model. That means providers of personal care service will need to find an EVV vendor to help them deliver that service starting January 1st of 2020. The state will then hire an aggregator to actually collect all that data from all those different providers out there so that we have access to the data. We know who showed up when they showed up, how long they were there. And so that's how we'll get the data that we need to make sure that the services that are authorized are getting utilized, and that we're only paying for services that are actually being utilized.

The cost for the EVV provider is the provider personal care services costs to do. So there's no new money going out there for our providers, but there is a requirement that this be a part of their overall service delivery. And we have a lot of providers of this state that have liked EVV. A lot of our providers talk about how they now know that their employees are there. They know exactly how long their employees are there. If you're there longer, you get paid for the entire time you're there. And that's I think, important for people to realize is that it does work really to enhance the system overall. If you want more information about EVV, MO HealthNet actually has an EVV website and we'll put that below the podcast that you guys can have access to it.

Heike Johns:
So how can PCS providers prepare for the implementation of EVV?

Val Huhn:
Ask questions if you don't understand what we're talking about, please. Because January 1st 2020 is six months away right now. So you need to be paying attention to this. You need to be asking questions. Same for individuals and families. Ask your provider of personal care services, are you ready for EVV come January 1st? Because if they're not, they will no longer be able to get paid for personal care services from the state.

We also want to make sure that they select the appropriate type of EVV vendor, and there's lots of those vendors that are out, like I said, operating in Missouri already today. So we have a good track record with a lot of these vendors and we will make sure that a list of those are available through our provider relations folks so that you know potential vendors you need to contact. That's pretty much it. Again, make sure everybody's talking about it so that nobody's caught off guard on January 1st of 2020.

Heike Johns:
Thank you so much for this month's update.

Val Huhn:
Thank you.