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MASSHEALTH MAY HAVE PAID \$6.2 MIL FOR UNNECESSARY DRUG TESTS

MassHealth may have paid laboratories \$6.2 million for unnecessary drug tests, according to a new state audit.

The findings, based on an audit covering July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2016, warrant further investigation of MassHealth, according to Michael Wessler, communications chief for Auditor Suzanne Bump. He said auditors detected "some egregious instances of unnecessary drug testing."

The audit was launched to determine whether the nature and frequency of testing complied with MassHealth regulations, which allow authorized prescribers treating members to order and use drug tests for diagnosis, treatment or otherwise medically necessary purposes.

Of the nearly \$40 million spent on drug tests by MassHealth, auditors found that \$21,073 was spent on drug tests that were not supported by proper documentation. The audit also found that MassHealth may have paid for improper drug tests provided to members residing in sober homes.

The audit was conducted as part of auditor's ongoing oversight of the Medicaid program. A previously issued audit report disclosed significant weaknesses in MassHealth's claim-processing system for drug tests, which resulted in millions of dollars in potentially improper payments.

On Thursday, Gov. Charlie Baker signed the \$41.7 billion annual state budget, touting a reduced rate of spending growth in the MassHealth program.

MassHealth disagreed with the findings. In response to the audit, the agency said the auditors "based part of [their] finding on the review of one of three labs," and that it was an example of "extrapolation methodology." - Chris Triunfo/SHNS

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