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Governor

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Lt. Governor

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***American Samoa Hosts Annual Medicaid Health Summit: A Call to Action for Health Equity and Access***

**PAGO PAGO, AMERICAN SAMOA** – The American Samoa Medicaid State Agency hosted its **Medicaid Health Summit** from March 24–26, 2025, gathering leaders from across government, healthcare, and the community to collaborate under the theme: *“O le Ta Avega Tausoa Fa’atasi – Working Together for a Healthier American Samoa.”*

In her opening address, Medicaid Director Luisa Kuaea welcomed attendees with a call for unity and leadership, highlighting the agency’s mission to expand access to quality healthcare for the people of American Samoa.

“While Medicaid can’t cover everyone or everything right now, this summit marks the beginning of a shared commitment to do more,” Kuaea said. “We can expand services, strengthen our healthcare system, and build strong partnerships so no one in our community is left without care.”

Appointed by Governor Pulaali’i Nikolao Pula and Lt. Governor Pulu Ae Ae Jr., Director Kuaea laid out a vision that emphasizes collaboration, innovation, and accountability. The summit brought together diverse voices to address pressing healthcare gaps, from off-island referrals to long-term services for elders, while also promoting greater awareness of Medicaid’s unique role under the territory’s 1902(j) waiver.

Panel discussions and breakout sessions addressed local service delivery, federal policy implications, and strategies to empower families with the information they need to navigate the healthcare system. The summit also spotlighted efforts to reestablish off-island referral partnerships in Hawai‘i, including renewed engagements with Straub and Queen’s Medical Center.

In her closing remarks, Director Kuaea honored the legacy of those who came before her, including the late Director Niutoa Andy Puleasi and former Director Sandra King Young.

“Each played a role in shaping what exists today,” she said. “While we may lead differently,

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I honor the work they’ve done to grow this program. Now the real work continues—building a healthier, more equitable system of care for our people.”

She also thanked Medicaid staff, panelists, and community partners for their dedication and reaffirmed the agency’s commitment to the people of American Samoa, especially in light of looming federal cuts to Medicaid that could impact healthcare access nationwide.

“Healthcare is not a privilege—it is a human right. And here in American Samoa, we will continue to fight for it,” said Kuaea.

The annual summit is expected to continue serving as a platform for cross-sector collaboration, healthcare innovation, and collective action toward a healthier future for all residents of American Samoa.



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