

NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

WHA Calendar:

Labor Committee Meeting
12/9-12/10
Cheyenne

DOH Health Association Meeting
12/7
Cheyenne

Joint Appropriations Meeting
12/13-12/17
Cheyenne

Other Events:

Board of Nursing Tour de Hospital Kemmerer
12/15

Legislative Session Begins
1/11
Cheyenne

Volume 40, Number 46

December 3, 2010

Governor Requests More Than \$165 Million for Medicaid

Gov. Dave Freudenthal requested more than \$165 million for Medicaid in the supplemental budget request he submitted to legislators last week.

The governor's entire supplemental budget includes more than \$248 million in general fund requests. The legislature's Joint Appropriations Committee will consider the governor's requests when it meets in Cheyenne on Dec. 14 and 15.

Ultimately the legislature will determine which of the governor's requests will be funded, and at what level, during the general session that begins on Jan. 11.

"Wyoming is a compassionate state as reflected in our human services budgets," Gov. Freudenthal said in his budget message. "But compassion must be accompanied by fiscal discipline."

Included in his requests for Medicaid is a \$66.2 million reserve to cover the projected Medicaid budget shortfall for the current biennium. Additionally, the governor recommended adding another \$25 million to the existing \$25 Medicaid reserve account, creating a \$50 million hedge against additional increases.

His request also includes \$51.2 million for the 2013/2014 biennium to offset the loss of federal stimulus dollars that are currently supporting Medicaid budgets.

In total, the request includes more than \$165 million for Medicaid contingencies.

Sen. Phil Nicholas, R-Laramie, co-chairman of the Joint Appropriations Committee, said the governor's recommendations raise a number of concerns.

He said the supplemental requests from the Department of Health signal a larger problem of cost management in the Medicaid program. He said if shortfalls in that part of the budget continue to grow at the current rate, there will be no money available for other agencies.

"We need to look at sustainability," Sen. Nicholas told the Wyoming Tribune Eagle. "Can we sustain the level of funding being requested into the next biennium? I don't think we can. You have one agency consisting of almost a third of the entire budget."

The governor pointed out in his budget message that Medicaid enrollment figures

have continued to grow at a higher rate than projected, as has the number of Medicaid recipients obtaining medical services. Both have been accompanied by higher costs throughout the healthcare system.

"I am disappointed that the Medicaid program has not more aggressively pursued cost containment concepts to manage costs within the system," he said in his message. "It is imperative to develop a stronger understanding of cost drivers and enrollment trends to better forecast future costs."

The governor also highlighted in his message the progress that has been made in designing a benefit program through the Healthy Frontiers demonstration project. He signed the plan of operation for the program last week.

To participate in the demonstration project, enrollees must work at least 20 hours a week; they must be uninsured; and they must earn an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

In his budget message, the governor indicated that he expects individuals will already be enrolled in the Health Frontiers program when the legislature convenes in January.





Don't forget to send us a story about your hospital so we can feature you in our Member Spotlight section!

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Robots Ensure Cleanliness of CCMH Patient Rooms

Gizmo and Junior – two of Campbell County Memorial Hospital’s (CCMH) newest ‘employees’ have a single purpose: to make the hospital environment safer for patients.

The R2D2-looking robots are part of a state-of-the-art Bioquell Q-10 Suite cleaning system.

The system is used after a patient who is considered to have been carrying a communicable disease is released from the hospital.

Once the patient is released, the robot team goes

to work sterilizing the room before the next patient moves in.

After hospital staff have determined the particular infection and sealed off the patient room, Gizmo produces a hydrogen peroxide vapor that covers all items in the room. Hydrogen peroxide for home use is a 3 percent concentration – but Gizmo uses a 35 percent concentration that is strong enough to kill any bacteria in the room.

Junior acts as a fan to spread the vapor and then

convert the hydrogen peroxide vapor to a safe, residue-free water vapor and oxygen. When normal oxygen levels are restored, patients may re-enter the room.

“We want to be able to be absolutely sure when a patient leaves that has a communicable disease and agent that we can guarantee you that room doesn’t have any agent,” said Baerbel Merrill, vice president of CCMH’s mission division.

State Government Relations Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the State Association Government Relations Officers (SAGRO) was recently held, with Neil Hilton participating from WHA, among the 31 states represented at the sessions.

The significance of the recent elections, at both the federal and state level, certainly flavored the agenda with many common concerns about the landscape of healthcare reform.

Attendees participated in a comprehensive analysis of many core elements of the federal reform initiatives and compared thoughts in how individual states are

preparing for effective implementation plans.

Several common concerns surfaced as nationwide challenges, most notably the expansion of Medicaid programs and the budgetary considerations facing the states.

The State of Ohio has recent experience in implementation of a provider tax and other states have also taken this approach, designed to assist Medicaid budgets to be met in a reasonable and appropriate manner.

Other issues of discussion included health insurance exchanges, labor and

workforce challenges, and the elements of health information exchange and accompanying information technology needs that remain to be fully defined.

Each of these areas of focus certainly continues to drive much of our activity in Wyoming as well, directly with WHA and all constituents and agencies involved in these efforts.

In closing, Daniel Landon of the Missouri Hospital Association gave an excellent presentation on the ever increasing role that community hospitals play across the country.

In Memoriam—Dan Lex

It is with a sad heart that we say good bye to our dear friend and colleague, Dan Lex.

Dan passed away on December 1 after fighting a

courageous battle with cancer.

Dan was the executive director of the Quality Health Care Foundation and

an outstanding leader in the healthcare profession.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Dan’s family and we know he will be greatly missed.