



# NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

## WHA Calendar:

WHA Board Meeting 3/19

HFMA Meeting 3/25-3/26  
Riverton

WSHE Spring Meeting 5/7-5/10  
Casper

## Other Events

ACHE Congress/ Annual Meeting 3/22-3/25  
Chicago, IL

AHA RPB Meeting 3/9-3/12  
Scottsdale, AZ

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## Healthcare Reform Pilot Project Passes Wyoming Legislature

The third time was, indeed, the charm.

After failing in the two previous legislative sessions, a bill that will create a healthcare reform pilot project passed its final reading in the Wyoming House of Representatives last week and now heads to the Governor's desk for his signature.

Gov. Dave Freudenthal signaled his support for the measure during his State of the State address last year, and he did so again to kick off the 2010 Budget Session of the Wyoming Legislature.

Legislators who had opposed the measure last year commented that the latest version of the bill had been refined to a point that they could support it. In fact, Rep. Kermit Brown, R-Laramie, discussed his anguish in voting against the bill last year, even as he carried the bill on the House floor this year.

The bill will create a limited-scope program for people who earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid, but who cannot afford private insurance. Participants will be required to maintain part-time employment, and they will be required to contribute to their healthcare costs through copays and other mechanisms.

The program emphasizes

prevention and personal responsibility, and truly represents a state-based healthcare reform effort that could serve as a model for other states.

The bill's primary sponsor, Sen. Charles Scott, R-Casper, has asserted each year that the bill is an experiment and is not likely to get all of the details right the first time around.

As a result, legislators may revisit the program in subsequent sessions to make adjustments.

The Wyoming Hospital Association supported the bill throughout the legislative process, as did the Wyoming Medical Society, the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, America's Health Insurance Plans, and the AARP.

The Legislature also passed a bill last week that will extend the Wyoming Investment in Nursing (WyIN) program through 2016.

Only one year of funding for the program was originally included in the bill. But the full biennial amount, about \$5.2 million, was included in the budget bill. Funding was therefore stripped from the bill, clearing its path through the Legislature in a year when all bills with appropriations in them were carefully scruti-

nized by legislators.

Lastly, a bill that would have allowed whistleblowers who were fired by hospitals to sue the hospital failed last week without consideration in the Senate. House Bill 91 had passed the House and the Senate Judiciary Committee, but it did not come up for debate in the Senate before that body's deadline for consideration.

### Nurse For The Day Volunteers

**Alyssa Morrison**, Wyoming State Hospital

**Mary Ann Duncan**, Crook County Medical Services District

**Jeanne Kennedy**, Ivinson Memorial Hospital

**Kacia Hansen**, Ivinson Memorial Hospital

**Cindy Woods**, Platte County Memorial Hospital

**Rebeka Rutar**, Ivinson Memorial Hospital

**Angela Harr**, Crook County Medical Services District

**Celine Barbour**, Cheyenne Regional Medical Center

**Betsy Hartman**, Cheyenne

**Donna Hays**, Riverton

**Michelle Parks**, Wyoming State Hospital

**Amanda Gonzalez**, Wyoming State Hospital



*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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## Sheridan Hospital Begins Therapy Dog Program

Sometimes after a bad day, the only thing that might cheer you up is your dog, just the sight of how excited it is to see you with its tail wagging fiercely and how it gently nuzzles you with its nose or snuggles with you on the couch.

Hospital patients can now find that comfort with the new pet therapy program at Sheridan Memorial Hospital (SMH). Patients can choose whether they would like to have a visit from the therapy dog.

Patty Forister, volunteer services coordinator, launched the program with the first pet visit January 24.

The first therapy dog to visit patients was Sydney, a Catahoula mix owned by Sue Vogel. Vogel said Sydney has been a therapy dog for two years. She takes her to nursing homes as well.

While it may not be for everyone, the patients who choose to have a visit really do love it. One patient said, "I have five dogs at home and they're like my babies."

This is so nice to have a dog come and visit.

Currently four dog handlers are going through the extensive process to become volunteers who are approved to bring certified therapy dogs to visit patients at the hospital.

Hospital requirements for pet therapy include specific guidelines to ensure patient safety and to adhere to infection-control procedure.

## WCAHN Responds to CMS Rule on Observation Services

The Wyoming Critical Access Hospital Network (WCAHN) is coordinating a response to CMS regarding that agency's recent rule, which changes physician supervision regulations for critical access hospitals.

Essentially, the rule requires a supervising physician for the provision of observation services at CAHs. Further, CAHs will apparently not be allowed to bill for these services when there is no supervising physician.

The rule change is likely to create operational and financial problems for small hospitals that may not be able to have physicians on site to provide the new level of oversight.

The WCAHN is preparing a letter that will be sent to CMS outlining the practical impacts of the rule on Wyoming CAHs. Simultaneously, the WCAHN is preparing a letter for Wyoming's Congressional delegation as well.

CMS has scheduled a

Rural Health Open Door Forum for noon Mountain Time on Tuesday, March 9, to provide an opportunity for dialog about the rule and its impacts. The WCAHN will participate in that forum, and Wyoming CAHs are encouraged to participate as well.

Registration information for the CMS Forum can be located at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/OpenDoorForums/Downloads/Rural030910.pdf>.

## More Communities Eligible for Rural Health Clinics

The U.S. Health Resources and Service Administration has approved additional areas of Wyoming as underserved and eligible for Rural Health Clinic status, qualifying for higher Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement rates.

Wyoming has sixteen Rural Health Clinics in eight counties serving 185,000

residents.

All primary care clinics in Albany, Crook and Sheridan counties are eligible to apply to the Office of Healthcare Licensing and Surveys to become certified Rural Health Clinics, as are clinics in eastern Uinta, southeastern Fremont and northern Campbell counties.

Rural Health Clinics can

be an extension of an existing hospital or can be privately owned.

A 2008 study indicated an annual reimbursement increase of \$25,000 on average per clinic per patient care they already provide.

More information can be obtained at [www.health.wyo.gov](http://www.health.wyo.gov) or the Office of Rural Health at 307-777-2930.