

NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

Volume 39, Number 20

May 22, 2009

WHA Calendar:

Governor's Summit on Workforce Solutions	5/28
Hospital Advisory Group Meeting	6/17
WHA PAC Golf Tournament Sheridan	9/29
WHA Annual Meeting & Convention Sheridan	9/30-10/1

Other Events:

Western Regional Flex Conference Lake Tahoe, NV	6/10
Western Regional Trustee Symposium Albuquerque, NM	6/10
Wyoming Medical Society Meeting, Sheridan	6/11
AHA Regional Policy Board Meeting Idaho	6/25

Finance Committee Issues Options for Financing Reform

The Senate Finance Committee has completed the third of three roundtable discussions on its proposals for healthcare reform, and the committee now expects to have a bill ready for debate in June.

After considering and publishing detailed papers on healthcare delivery and coverage options, the committee dealt with financing options in its final session.

The result is a 39-page compendium of options to pay for what the committee referred to as responsible healthcare reform that provides coverage for all Americans while reducing the rate of growth in healthcare spending.

Although the quality of care provided to most Americans is excellent, according to the committee, the way care is delivered and paid for does not always encourage the right care at the right time for every patient.

The options outlined in the report include steps to drive savings in Medicare and Medicaid, such as reducing or eliminating Medicare market basket updates in 2010 for provider payment areas recommended by Med-PAC, updating payment rates for home health services, and updating payment rates for inpatient services.

Additionally, the committee considered a number of options for "healthcare related revenue raisers." This section includes a proposal to modify the requirements for tax-exempt hospitals.

Under such a proposal, the committee would consider codifying organizational and operational requirements for determining whether a hospital is a chari-



table organization for the purpose of its tax-exempt status.

Suggested requirements include that tax-exempt hospitals regularly conduct a community needs analysis, provide a minimum annual level of charity care, not refuse service based on a patient's inability to pay, and follow certain procedures before beginning collection actions against patients.

The proposal also includes provisions that would ensure "proper reporting and transparency of operations."

And it provides for penalties that are designed to encourage compliance with the operational requirements.

The Wyoming Hospital Association has contacted Sen. Mike Enzi's office to discuss its concerns about threatening hospitals' tax-exempt status. Most notably, schedule H of the new IRS Form 990 already requires not-for-profit hospitals to submit comprehensive data on their community benefit activities, including charity care.

With that approach set for full implementation in tax year 2009, the WHA and the AHA oppose the notion of legislating new charity care policies before the revised IRS form has been fully

rolled out.

Sen. Enzi is a member of the Senate Finance Committee.

The committee's financing proposal also includes a list of "Lifestyle Related Revenue Raisers." On that list are a proposed uniform alcohol excise tax of \$16 per proof gallon on all alcoholic beverages, and a sugar-sweetened beverage excise tax that would be applied to non-diet sodas, fruit and vegetable drinks, sports drinks, iced tea and coffee, and flavored milk and dairy drinks.



Star Valley Care Center Earns Clean Bills of Health

Deficiency-free surveys are a rare achievement. And two deficiency-free surveys at the same time, according to the surveyors, are unheard of.

Star Valley Care Center recently earned that rare distinction when it received clean bills of health during its annual survey and its annual Life Safety Survey.



Department of Health surveyors visit 37 long-term

care facilities in Wyoming on a 12- to 15-month rotation, depending on the results of previous surveys. Star Valley Care Center has been on a 15-month survey calendar since it opened in 1997.

During their visit to Star Valley Care Center, surveyors praised the staff for their friendly, caring attitudes, for how well the residents are cared for, and for the cleanliness of the facility.

Surveyors conducted a fire drill during the Life Safety Survey, in addition to inspecting all rooms and the space above the ceiling for fire hazards.

Star Valley Care Center received no citations during either survey. Each of the surveyors had at least 8 years of experience, and none of them had ever performed a deficiency-free state survey.

HPSA Expansion to Strengthen Recruitment Efforts

Recent action by Gov. Dave Freudenthal will mean an increase in federal funds for certain rural health clinics in Wyoming and opportunities to strengthen rural health recruitment efforts.

Much of Wyoming faces a significant shortage of physicians and other primary care health professionals, the Governor said. We need to pursue every avenue to increase access to care and expand the availability of federal funding in these areas.

Freudenthal requested a Governor's Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designation for Wyoming from the federal government. HPSAs are counties, partial counties or communities that, by federal definition, have too few primary care providers for the populations they serve.

The HPSA approval makes it easier for certain areas of Wyoming to qualify for federal Rural Health Clinic status. Rural Health Clinics increase primary

care services for Medicaid, Medicare and other patients in rural, underserved communities. The clinics can be public, private or non-profit organizations.

With the new HPSA designation, new areas in Wyoming that are now eligible to obtain Rural Health Clinic status include Albany County, northern Campbell County, Crook County, Uinta County, Fremont County, northern Lincoln County and Sheridan County.

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Loan Repayment Application Period Approaching

The application period is fast approaching for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Loan Repayment Program and Scholar Placement.

Applications for the money approved in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will be received from June 2009 through September 2010. These programs are intended

to award more than \$200 million during that time.

Professions that are eligible for the program include primary care physicians, primary care nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, primary care physician assistants, dentists, dental hygienists, and behavioral and mental health providers.

Outpatient care locations

must be approved by the NHSC for current or future employees to participate. This application, as well as the general program application, can be downloaded at <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov>.

For more information, contact Jeff Hopkins at the Department of Health. He can be reached at 307-777-2930, or jeff.hopkins@health.wyo.gov.

Wyoming Hospital Association

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