

March of Dimes, Hospitals Prepare Backpacks for Families With Premature Infants

The state's March of Dimes chapter has teamed up with some Wyoming hospitals to provide families with support of premature babies or babies with birth defects. These backpacks will be distributed to hospitals in Casper, Cheyenne, Gillette, Lander, Riverton and probably Rock Springs. March of Dimes chapters across the country are stuffing navy blue backpacks to help mothers who deliver prematurely. They contain three educational booklets and two videos on what to expect with a premature baby. There are lists of community resources, teddy bears and a baby blanket. The mother wraps the blanket around herself allowing it to pick up her scent and then it is placed with the baby. The Wyoming backpacks contain some additional items. Because women, their families and their premature babies have to travel out-of-state, these backpacks contain various toiletries. Wyoming mothers also get disposable cameras and phone cards, and the backpacks are designed to help parents get through the first 24 hours.

Pandemic Influenza Disaster Drill

The Wyoming Department of Health will be conducting a Pandemic Influenza Functional Public Health disaster exercise in late June 2008. This exercise will benefit the health and medical sector's ability to prepare and respond to the threat of pandemic influenza by exercising the following major objectives: 1) NIMS/ICS/HICS, 2) Disease Detection and Reporting, 3) Mass Prophylaxis, 4) Medical Surge Capacity, 5) Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions, 6) Communications to include WARN, WebEOC, and 7) Continuity of Operations (COOP). The scenario is to exercise all seven objectives, with at least three exercised at the functional level. These efforts will help exercise the emergency readiness level of Wyoming's public health, hospital sectors, and emergency medical services to guide improvement efforts in public health preparedness. In late January WDH will be sending out invitations to participate in this State Wide exercise and it's design. The following is a description of a Functional Exercise (FE): Functional Exercises are designed to assess and evaluate individual capabilities, multiple functions or activities within a function, or interdependent groups of functions. It is generally focused on exercising the plans, policies, procedures, and staffs of the direction and control nodes of incident command and unified command. Generally, events are projected through an exercise scenario with event updates that drive activity at the management level. The movement of personnel and equipment is simulated. The objective of the FE is to execute specific plans and procedures and apply established policies, plans, and procedures under crisis conditions, within or by a particular function team(s). The FE simulates the reality of operations in a functional area by presenting complex and realistic problems requiring rapid and effective responses by trained personnel in a highly stressful environment.

In Memoriam

Richard "Dick" Mills passed away on December 28, 2007. Dick was a life member of the Wyoming Hospital Association, serving on the Board for ten years and was board chairman twice. He served on the American Hospital Association Region VIII Policy Board for eight years as alternate delegate and delegate.

National Drug Code Effective March 1st

There are changes coming in the near future to the reporting of National Drug Codes on professional and institutional claims. These changes will go into effect March 1, 2008. Until recently, the federal Medicaid Drug Rebate Program only required state Medicaid programs to invoice drug manufacturers for products supplied through retail pharmacies. However, passage of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) made significant changes to the program, including the requirement to invoice drug manufacturers for products administered in an office, clinic, hospital or other outpatient setting. To meet the requirement of the DRA,

state Medicaid programs must require their providers to report National Drug Codes (NDCs) on professional and institutional claims when certain drug-related procedure codes are billed. EqualityCare had intended to make the requirement effective January 1, 2007, but delayed implementation for a year to allow providers additional time to prepare. The requirement becomes effective for dates of service on and after March 1, 2008. The bulletin and list of Procedure codes requiring NDC's may be found at <http://wyequalitycare.acs-inc.com/NDC.html>.

Nursing Students Have Continuing Access To Rural Degree Possibility

The Fay W. Whitney School of Nursing (SON) has won a second round of funding for the nurse, education, practice, and retention continuation proposal Leadership Education to Advance Practice (LEAP). The Health Resources and Administration awarded the \$850,000 grant for a three-year period to allow the SON to continue this innovative work with the online registered nurse/bachelor of science degree program and expand the program statewide. The program has two objectives. One is to pave the way to earlier entry and faster completion of bachelor degree nursing programs, and the other is to address critical public health issues faced by rural Wyoming residents.

HQA Data Preview Period To Begin January 17th

Hospitals participating in the Hospital Quality Alliance (HQA) can preview their latest quarterly data and initial HCAHPS survey data beginning January 17th at the QualityNet Exchange Web site. Meanwhile, hospitals should consider which staff members should review the HCAHPS data, such as those who handle patient surveys, communications and marketing staff, and consumer advocates. The appropriate staff should review all of the data and report any errors to their Quality Improvement Organization by February 15th. HCAHPS is the new national standard for collecting and publicly reporting information on patient experiences with inpatient care. The first data from HCAHPS will be reported on the "Hospital Compare" Web site in March 2008.

AHA Posts Election-Related Legal Guidance For Hospitals

The AHA has posted guidance prepared by AHA outside counsel Perkins Coie that describes the types of activities 501(c)(3) organizations such as hospitals and hospital associations can legally conduct in connection with election campaigns. Accessible to AHA members at www.aha.org, the guidance anticipates questions that member hospitals may have as the 2008 campaign season continues. For example, it explains that nonpartisan voter education and registration activities to help the public understand and debate important issues are appropriate and encouraged, but hospitals cannot support, oppose or influence voters' opinions of a political candidate. The document notes that Federal Election Commission rules govern acceptable advertising content, and restrict how soon before elections such ads can be aired or published. It also covers appropriate content for voter guides and candidate questionnaires, and permissible ways of educating candidates about key issues.