

NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

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WHA Calendar:

Annual Meeting & Convention 9/26-9/27
Little America
Cheyenne

Other Events:

Western Regional Trustee Symposium 6/13-6/15
Big Sky, MT

Western Region Flex Conference 6/14-6/15
Park City, UT

Department of Health First Phase of Options Study

Department of Health officials presented the first phase of its Medicaid Options Study last week during the first interim meeting of the Joint Labor, Health, and Social Services Committee.

During the meeting in Casper, Department Director Tom Forslund told the committee that the study will be conducted in phases, including an identification of cost drivers in the Medicaid program, the development of options for modifying the program, and ultimately the preparation of recommendations for the committee.

The study was authorized by the Legislature as a way to identify methods to control Medicaid costs while continuing to deliver high-quality care to Medicaid recipients.

Mr. Forslund told the committee that Medicaid is a complex program that does not lend itself to simple solutions.

"There is no silver bullet," he said.

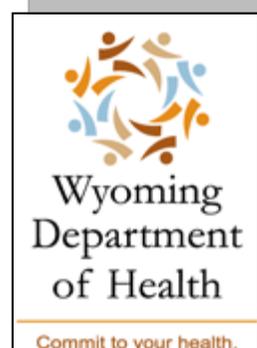
That's why the first phase of the study focused on the creation of a database that allowed the Department to mine for cost drivers and trends. Though the first phase is not quite complete, Mr. Forslund nevertheless presented its initial findings.

The study identified the most expensive areas of

Medicaid spending, broke Medicaid recipients into key categories, and then analyzed their costs per person, as well as the increases in spending over a three-year period.

Developmental disability waivers, hospitals, nursing homes, and physicians, in that order, were the most expensive major groups.

Within those groups, the blind, aged, and disabled were the most expensive, averaging \$23,454 per person.



Overall, children are the largest category of Medicaid recipients, but they comprise a relatively low cost category, averaging \$2,674 per person.

The study also revealed that 5% of Wyoming's Medicaid recipients drive about 52% of the program's costs.

That small group, Mr. Forslund said, should be the focus of cost control efforts, since the largest group of

recipients drives a much smaller portion of spending.

For example, the top 5% costs about \$69,659 per person per year, while the bottom 80% of recipients costs about \$1,431 per person per year.

With its more robust database, the Department was able to drill down further and learn the specific costs of specific conditions. Within the children's category, for example, low-birth weight babies cost about \$91,000 per case.

That level of specificity will enable the Department and the Committee to identify targeted policy proposals that could help reduce costs, while ensuring the continued delivery of quality care.

Committee members also discussed potential causes of increased Medicaid costs, including general medical inflation, 'outliers' in the Medicaid program such as premature babies and burn victims, and the fact that advances in medicine enable providers to deliver more expensive, life-saving treatments that were not previously available.

Department officials intend to begin seeking stakeholder input this summer about options for the Medicaid program. They will present options and recommendations to the committee later this fall.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



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



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MHSC Opens Lending Closet for Cancer Patients

Cancer affects nearly everyone, whether they are diagnosed themselves, or whether someone very close to them has been diagnosed.

For those diagnosed, the side effects than change their bodies in unimaginable ways. From hair loss to skin changes, to surgeries that aim to rid the body of cancer, scars are left behind.

Memorial Hospital of Sweetwater County and the Sweetwater County Ameri-

can Cancer Society have teamed up to help by creating the Lending Closet at Memorial Hospital.

The Lending Closet provides wigs, prosthetics, hats, scarves and other garments to cancer patients.

They are also preparing to launch the "Look Good, Feel Better" program, which consists of teaching cancer patients about skin care, cosmetics, and fitting wigs

and prostheses.

"I've lost two aunts very early in their life to cancer. I've seen how it affected them as their appearance changed," said Gary Collins, public relations and marketing director at MHSC.

"(This program) provides the resources and a support system to allow you to look good, feel better about yourself and focus on fighting this terrible disease."

WHA Launches Healthcare Leadership Training

The Wyoming Critical Access Hospital Network has launched the fourth session of an educational program designed to help healthcare professionals transition effectively from technical experts to leaders and managers.

The program is funded by the Medicare Flex program, which also provides funding for the Wyoming Critical Access Hospital Network.

Once again, the program has been expanded

based on recommendations from WCAHN members to ensure that all participants receive essential training in the basics of effective leadership, developing patient loyalty, and building and managing budgets.

In the past, the program was designed sequentially and participants were required to take all 9 courses in order.

Once again this year, however, you may register for only the courses you wish to take.

There is only one exception – the Essentials of Leadership course is a prerequisite for all others, so please be sure to register for that course.

The program, which is provided at no cost to critical access hospitals, begins June 8 and is delivered via the statewide telehealth video conferencing network.

To register for the program, email steve@wyohospitals.com, or call the WHA at (307) 632-9344.

Helmsley Charitable Trust Continues Investment in Wyoming

Since 2010, the Helmsley Charitable Trust has given nearly \$10.5 million to 10 Wyoming hospitals.

Those dollars have helped fund technological advancements that are connecting the state's rural hospitals to emergency and pharmacy specialists.

And that number went up most recently when the organization awarded \$853,694 to Star Valley Medical Center for eCare, a

program that gives physicians immediate access to specialists and pharmacists 24 hours a day.

Hospitals in Douglas, Gillette, Kemmerer, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thermopolis, Wheatland, Powell, and Buffalo have also benefited from the Trust's dedication to strengthening rural healthcare.

For SVMC, the grant will be used to purchase equip-

ment for two types of eCare: eEmergency and ePharmacy.

eEmergency ensures that board-certified emergency physicians and emergency-trained nurses are available to assist local providers in treating trauma, heart attack, stroke, and other critical conditions.

ePharmacy provides 24-hour access to hospital-trained pharmacists.