



NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

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December 4, 2015

WHA Calendar:

LeadingAge Wyoming Board Meeting	1/19

Other Events:

Joint Labor, Health & Social Services Committee Cheyenne	1/7-1/8
Legislature Convenes	2/8

Mental Health Reforms Discussed

A legislative subcommittee voted to recommend a bill that would give courts flexibility to order outpatient mental-health or substance-abuse care instead relying only on the more expensive option of involuntary hospitalization.

Supporters say this should reduce state-funded health-care costs while also allowing some less severe cases to be treated at community-based treatment centers.

Patients can be hospitalized for 72 hours, but that can be extended if a judge approves an order finding the person mentally ill.

Counties are responsible for reimbursing hospitals or mental health facilities for costs in the first 72 hours. But the state pays the bills after that.

The Legislature set aside about \$4.4 million for the program for the two-year budget that ends in June.

But Stefan Johansson, a policy analyst in the state Department of Health, said his agency projects the program will face a \$11.3 million shortfall for the biennium.

According to state data, there were 208 involuntary hospitalizations in fiscal year 2012. But that number rose to 341 for the 2015 fiscal year, which ended this summer.

Along with the rising costs, the high number of involun-

tary hospitalizations has caused capacity issues at the State Hospital in Evanston and other inpatient hospitals.

The proposed legislation seeks to give judges flexibility in deciding what treatments to order. Instead of inpatient hospitalization, the bill would let them mandate treatment plans that could include:

- Admittance into community-based group homes.
- Temporarily use of inpatient or residential centers.
- Testing to determine if patients are using their medicine and not abusing alcohol or other drugs.

Courtney Hucke is a member of the Wyoming chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. She said she thinks it's a good idea.

The proposal now will be referred to the Legislature's Management Council, which is expected to forward it to the Joint Labor, Health and Social Services Interim Committee.

That panel then will decide whether to sponsor it for the 2016 session that begins in February.

But the subcommittee, decided to punt on a related bill that would reform how the state pays mental-health and substance-abuse centers for the state-funded care.

The proposal from the Department of Health would require counties to name a

"gatekeeper" who would be responsible for coordinating treatment prior to and after an emergency detention or involuntary hospitalization.

Rep. Mary Throne, D-Cheyenne, and Sen. Tony Ross, R-Cheyenne, who are the co-chairmen of the subcommittee, said they plan to ask legislative leadership to renew the subcommittee for a second year so they can continue studying the issue.

Eric Boley, President of the Wyoming Hospital Association testified that while these changes may help, the 1000 pound gorilla of access and transportation has not been addressed. He told the committee that this problem is not going away. The state has not increased access and he encouraged a look at building regional centers.

He also said the cost of transporting the patients that can actually get in to the state hospital or WBI is a significant and difficult burden for hospitals and law enforcement to bear.

Mental health and substance abuse is a growing problem nation wide. No commitment from the committee to look at additional funding was forthcoming and is problematic with the budgetary shortfalls the state is facing.



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

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MHCC Receives 2015 Guardian of Excellence Award

Memorial Hospital of Converse County (MHCC) was recently named a 2015 Guardian of Excellence Award winner by Press Ganey Associates, Inc.

The Guardian of Excellence Award recognizes top-performing health care organizations that have consistently achieved the 95th percentile or above of performance in Patient Experience.

MHCC's Ambulatory

Surgery Department has consistently placed in the 99th percentile for the past four quarters.

The 99th percentile ranking reflects that out of the 1,700 hospitals participating in the Press Ganey database, Memorial Hospital patients are experiencing the highest level of patient satisfaction possible.

"The Ambulatory Surgery and Emergency Department continue to inspire

and motivate us to continue to improve the patient experience in all service lines at Memorial Hospital," said CEO Ryan Smith. "I could not be more proud of all of the employees and providers at Memorial Hospital of Converse County, and their willingness to continue to improve our services on behalf of our patients, friends and neighbors."

2015 WINTER HFMA MEETING

On November 20, Senators Chris Rothfuss and Brian Boner and Representative Eric Barlow attended the HFMA Winter Conference.

At the request of the WHA the legislators held a two hour Q&A session and spent time with the financial representatives from many of the hospitals from across the state of Wyoming.

Main topics covered included Medicaid expansion, the budget shortfalls and challenges the state is facing and Title 25. The WHA

legislative initiatives for the upcoming budget session were also discussed and included new Upper Payment Limit (UPL) programs that would benefit all facilities across the state, as well as nursing homes.

The event proved to be a valuable experience allowing the WHA and members of the HFMA a great opportunity to interact with legislators and make hospital voices heard.



Governor Mead Releases Proposed Budget

Governor Matt Mead released details of his 2017-2018 biennial budget and spending reductions for fiscal year 2016 (FY16).

State revenue projections have decreased due to falling oil and natural gas prices and the market and regulatory difficulties faced by the coal industry.

Governor Mead asked state agencies to prioritize

their budgets and limit exception requests. Exception requests are for urgent needs and special projects beyond the standard budget.

The FY16 revenue shortfall is approximately \$159 million. Governor Mead identified unspent appropriations for projects where funds are not immediately necessary and set them aside. By taking this action,

he balanced the budget for the current year without drawing any money from elsewhere.

The Governor's letter and budget message are available on the Governor's website.

The entire budget is available at: budget-division/budget-fiscal-years/2017-2018