

NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

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WHA Calendar:

WHA PAC Golf 9/25
Tournament
Cheyenne

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

Other Events:

Wyoming 9/13-
Nursing Summit 9/15
Laramie, WY

Joint Health Committee Hears Second Medicaid Report

The legislature's Joint Labor, Health, and Social Services Committee heard the second Medicaid Options Study report during its meeting in Lovell last week.

During the presentation, Department of Health officials highlighted some of the 122 options identified in the report for controlling Medicaid costs and helping make the program more efficient.

The second report – of three that will ultimately be presented as part of the study – is an examination of options collected during the summer, when the Department of Health met with provider groups, issued an online survey, and hosted town hall meetings across the state to gather input.

The Department's final report is due to the committee in December. That report will offer recommendations for modifying the Medicaid program.

In fiscal year 2011, the state spent \$518.9 million on Medicaid for some 77,207 people who received services through the program. The average cost per recipient of services was \$6,720.

However, Director Tom Forslund pointed out that averages can mask the more useful information within the data. For example, about 20% of Medicaid recipients

drive about 83% of the program's costs. Meanwhile, the remaining 80% drive about 17% of the costs.

In order to generate meaningful results, Medicaid reforms must focus on that 20%, he said.

"That is critical to consider when you're looking at options," Mr. Forslund said.

The most costly services in the Medicaid program are hospitals, waiver services, nursing homes, physician services, and prescription drugs.

The report listed a number of options for dealing with these high-cost services. Among those options were expanded levels of case management services for high-cost recipients, moving to a managed care model for Medicaid, and implementing medical homes.

Mr. Forslund said that in the past, managed care companies had not been interested in Wyoming because of the state's low population and limited opportunities for savings through managed care.

More recently, however, he said he has been approached by national companies that are interested in working in Wyoming because they have developed approaches that can work in low-population rural states.

The report also provided options for dealing with another of the costly areas – overuse of emergency care. Among the options were limitations on the number of Medicaid-paid ER visits annually, the use of medical homes, and the implementation of co-payments.

Rep. Elaine Harvey, R-Lovell, offered another option: a screening process in the ER, or even by phone before ER visits, to help triage patients to the appropriate provider based on their conditions.

At a broader level, committee members and Department officials discussed state-based block grants for Medicaid as another option for controlling costs. Block grants have been discussed at the federal level as a method for controlling Medicaid spending.

At least one state, Rhode Island, has already implemented a Medicaid block grant through a federal waiver.

"I'll give you a 50% probability that a year from now we'll be talking about a Medicaid block grant," said Sen. Charles Scott, R-Casper.

Some of the options in the report would require legislative action, while others could be implemented through rule and regulation.

The committee will meet again in Casper in October to continue its consideration of potential Medicaid reforms.



Hot Springs Hosts Employee Summer Olympics

Under a perfect late spring sky, nearly 56 athletes gathered during lunch to compete in the first round of the Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Employee Olympics.

Events, such as thumb wrestling, challenged the skills of teams made up of employees from different departments scattered across the facility.

It was all in fun, of course, to enjoy the summer with free food and fun. The Employee Olympics were meant as

a team building exercise to be coordinated with the 2012 London Olympics.

Teams of four were made up of employees from different departments so the contest was not department against department. The teams competed in three different events on June 12, July 12 and August 14.

The August 14 round was held in Hot Springs State Park. Families were invited to the BBQ to watch and cheer on the athletes.

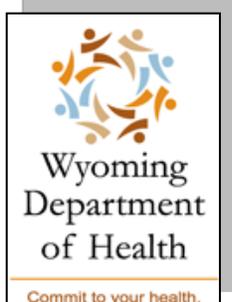
The final round consisted of discus throw (Frisbee)

triathlon (skipping, filling a container of water with a syringe and “driving” a wheelchair through a maze) and the balance beam on a short but wide apparatus.

“Everyone who participated had a great time” says CEO Robin Roling. “The feedback from employees was so positive that we are planning on having the HSCMH Employee Winter Olympics.”

The event was coordinated by the HSCMH Activities Committee.

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



Wyoming Hospital Association

2005 Warren Ave.
Cheyenne, WY
82001

www.wyohospitals.com

307.632.9344

Volunteers Sought for Medical Reserve Corps

September is National Preparedness Month.

Volunteers who would like to donate time and expertise to help prepare for and respond to emergencies and promote healthy living are asked by the Wyoming Department of Health to consider joining a local Medical Reserve Corps unit.

“We are looking for individuals with medical training and experience as well as other interested people to serve as leaders and volunteers to either start or join local Medical Reserve Corps units,” said Dr. Wendy Braund, state health officer and Public Health Division senior administrator with the Wy-

oming Department of Health.

Community-based Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) units are a specialized, health-related component of Citizen Corps, a national network of hometown security volunteers. The efforts of MRC volunteers supplement existing emergency and public health resources.

MRC units help find local needs and support their communities throughout the year with various activities.

Dr. Braund offered some Wyoming examples of MRC activity:

- In Natrona County, the local MRC provides basic EMT support for the Special Olympics, Casper College athletic

events and other events.

- The Albany County MRC has a strong presence with the University of Wyoming, and provides mental health first aid and fire rehabilitation.
- The Northeast Wyoming MRC helps with medical surge capacity for smaller hospital clinics during events.

Funding is available to start new local MRC units in Wyoming.

Residents interested in joining an existing MRC or starting one in their area can contact Angelyn Mayes at 307-587-5366 or angelyn.mayes@wyo.gov for more information.

Don't Forget to Register for WHA Convention

Final preparations are being made for the WHA Annual Meeting & Convention to be held September 26

and 27 in Cheyenne at the Little America Hotel and Resort. For more information or to register, visit

www.wyohospitals.com or call 307.632.9344.