



WVAHC *Reform News*

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care

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Several Reform Initiatives Moving **2009 Looks to Be the Year for Health Care Reform**

As the health care system continues on its disastrous course of rising costs and waning coverage, more groups are weighing in with potential solutions. In addition to WVAHC's "*Blueprint for Health Care Reform*," there are several notable reform efforts underway. A common theme of almost all of these reform discussions is the creation of a new delivery model that promotes patient-centered medical homes. This concept is explained on page 2. Here's an overview of the various initiatives, who is involved, and what they seek to achieve:

❖ **Select Committee D on Health:** This is the Legislature's initiative. The Committee is led by Senator Prezioso and Delegate Don Perdue, chairs

WVAHC's Third Annual Membership Meeting

WVAHC third annual Membership Meeting will be held between 10 AM and 2 PM on Saturday, October 25th at the West Virginia Education Association's offices at 1558 Quarrier Street, East in Charleston.

WVAHC members will elect a Vice President and Treasurer and six Board members for two-year terms. Additionally, WVAHC members will adopt WVAHC's 2009 legislative priorities and operating budget. There will also be an Executive Director's report reviewing this year's accomplishments and challenges for 2009.

All current WVAHC members are encouraged to attend. If you can bring a covered dish for lunch, that would be great. See you then.

of the Senate and House Health Committees. The key staff member for this initiative is Ken Thorpe, a health care economist from Emory University. Professor Thorpe was the architect of the comprehensive health care reform package that was adopted by Vermont in 2006. Vermont is considered the most significant state reform effort in the country. Vermont extended coverage to the uninsured, enhanced primary care and put prevention and disease management at the center of their delivery system.

Committee D has established four different subcommittees to consider specific health care reform issues. WVAHC staff or Board members serve on at least two of these committees.

The strength of this initiative is the support of legislative leaders for health reform. Additionally, having Ken Thorpe in West Virginia helping to direct this reform effort is a significant plus.

❖ **West Virginia Health Improvement Institute:** This is primarily an initiative aimed at using Medicaid to transform the health care system. Key staff members include Dr. Jeffery Coben of WVU Health Sciences and Roger Chaufourrier, a national consultant. Like Select Committee D, the Institute has established four committees to consider various aspects of health care reform, and WVAHC staff and Board members are representing the interests of consumers on several committees.

The key advantage of the Institute is \$1.7 million in Medicaid grant dollars to fund pilot projects around the state. If other payers, for example PEIA or Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield, contribute to this effort, there could be additional resources available.

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What Is a Patient-Centered Medical Home and Why Is This Important?

A patient-centered medical home is not just a place. It's not bricks and mortar. It is a means of enhancing primary care by investing in preventative services and chronic disease management.

Most importantly, it is a team effort to provide quality primary care. A physician or nurse practitioner leads a team of providers that may include physician assistants, nurses, dieticians, etc. The team plans for a patient visit. They know beforehand what chronic illnesses a patient has, and can review his or her individual treatment plan. A nurse coach may spend time with a diabetic patient providing in-depth education on ways the patient can better control his or her diabetes. Patients may meet in group visits where they share their experiences -- their trial and errors and successes -- in managing their diabetes. There have been successful "self management" techniques developed in recent years, and these best practices should be incorporated into the medical home.

A care coordinator ensures that patients, particularly

patients seeing multiple specialists, have their care coordinated. That doesn't happen in our current, fragmented system.

The medical home is also supported by health information technology. Ideally this will be an electronic medical record (EMR) which prompts the physician or other team members when a screen or preventative service (pap smear, colorectal exam, etc.) is overdue. EMRs can also store lab test results and x-ray and other imaging so tests won't be duplicated unnecessarily. EMRs can also electronically send a patient's prescription to his or her pharmacist, eliminating handwritten prescriptions and improving patient safety. And EMRs can review all of the diabetics or other patients with chronic illnesses to determine whether their health is improving, and how health improvements compare with other practices. Data drives quality improvements. If practices only have paper records, gathering and reviewing quality measures is difficult, if not impossible.

The potential of the patient-centered medical home is to improve the health status of West Virginians and reduce cost. However, it will be costly to implement. We need to pay providers for providing the additional services -- the patient education, the care coordination and purchasing EMRs. The Deloitte Healthcare Solutions, a subsidiary of a major accounting and tax consultation corporation, estimates that it may cost \$100,000 per physician in one-time cost and additional on-going cost. However, Deloitte also assumes that a patient-centered medical home will result in 10 percent fewer hospital admissions, 20 percent fewer emergency room visits and 10 percent decrease in absenteeism. If the medical home achieves these savings, it will mean significant reduction in total health care spending. And most importantly, it will improve the health of West Virginians. That is why developing medical homes is so important.



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Covering the Uninsured: If not us, who? If not now, when?

Whether or not West Virginia will expand coverage to the uninsured hinges on your and WVAHC efforts. Right now, few groups other than WVAHC are talking about expanding health care to the uninsured. We need your involvement, and here's what you can do to help.

❖ If you are not a member of WVAHC, or if your membership has lapsed, become a member of WVAHC and contribute as generously as you can. The common thread that runs through all the efforts listed in this newsletter is WVAHC's involvement. If you want consumers represented at the table, you need to support WVAHC.

❖ Host a house party for WVAHC. If you are interested in hosting a house party, contact us at pbryant@wvahc.org.

❖ Sign-up for WVAHC's free eUpdates. We send out eUpdates weekly during the legislative session and periodically during the rest of the year. This is great way for you to keep abreast of developments in health care reform efforts. You can register for our free eUpdates at www.wvahc.org/email_list.htm.

❖ Write a letter to the editor about the need for health care reform.

❖ Write a letter to your Senators and Delegate(s) about your experience with the health care system, and why you believe your representative should actively support quality, affordable health care for all West Virginians. A list of all Senators and Delegates and their addresses can be found on our web site.

❖ If you want to register for any of the four work groups for either Select Committee D or the Health Improvement Institute contact us at pbryant@wvahc.org.

Internet Resources

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care is at www.wvhac.org.

Select Committee D on Health is at <http://www.visionshared.com/healthcarereform/index.htm>

West Virginia Health Improvement Institute is at www.wvhealthimprovement.org

West Virginians' Campaign for a Healthy Future is at www.wvhealthyfuture.com

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The other key advantage to the Institute is the expertise and experience of Roger Chaufournier.

❖ **Stakeholders Health Care Reform Coalition.** For more than two years, WVAHC has convened a diverse group of organizations to consider health care reform options. These organizations include the State Chamber of Commerce, Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield, the Hospital Association, members of the faith-based community and from time to time the State Medical Association. This diverse group is concentrating on developing an actuarial model so that accurate financial projections can be made for any health care reform options. Creation of the actuarial model has received significant funding from the Health Care Authority and partial funding by a grant from the Benedum Foundation. However, without the active involvement of WVAHC, it is unlikely that the actuarial model would have been developed.

In addition to the development of the actuarial model, the other key strength of the Stakeholders group is

the active involvement of the business community. This involvement has been absent from the two other efforts listed above. Many experts believe that health care reform efforts will not be successful until those who purchase health care demand significant changes.

❖ **West Virginians' Campaign for a Healthy Future:** This is a coalition comprised mostly of labor organizations, AARP, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association (PhRMA), the AFL-CIO, West Virginia Education Association and WVAHC. The strength of this organization is that they have the capability of running a professional campaign in support of health care reform. An example of their effort is the recently released public opinion poll showing that 72 percent of West Virginians want health care reform. The Campaign's goal is to raise significant amounts of money in order to run a paid media campaign just before and during the 2009 legislative session in support of reform.

Membership Form

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care

Yes, I want to be a part of helping to reform health care in West Virginia.

Enclosed is my contribution for \$50____ \$75____ \$100____

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____

Email Address : _____

(Please print clearly)

I would like to volunteer for WVAHC. Please contact me.

Please return your membership form to:

WVAHC, 1544 Lee Street, Charleston, West Virginia 25311.

--Thank you!

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