



UTAH HEALTH POLICY PROJECT

# HEALTH MATTERS

## Health Matters E-Newsletter

April 15, 2008

Hello Health Advocates!

With the first *Health Matters* of Spring we look forward to the HB133 Task Force, Len Nichols' visit to Utah, Legislative Interim, UHPP's *Community Input Survey and Prize Drawing*, hearing your stories, and much more! Read on...

### In this issue...

1. [Health Reform Task Force meets 7:30- 12:00, Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup> at the Capitol](#)
2. [Legislative Interim Study Items \(Interim begins Wednesday, April 16\)](#)
3. ['Cover the Uninsured Week' Event: Health Reform Strategy with Len Nichols on April 30<sup>th</sup>](#)
4. [Monthly Meeting Revival](#)
5. [Utah Medicaid Policy Partnership Retreat April 23<sup>rd</sup>](#)
6. [Call for Stories](#)
7. [Call for Volunteers](#)
8. [UHPP's Community Input Survey: Enter to Win 1 of 8 Prizes](#)

### 1. Health Reform Task Force meets 8:00-12:00, Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup> at the Capitol

With the 2008 Legislative Session a good month behind us, it is time to set the course for health system reform in Utah. The passage of [HB133, Health System Reform](#), establishes the framework for an ambitious, multi-year reform process along with specific issues to be addressed by a task force comprised of legislators.

First order of business was to appoint members to the task force. The appointees include the following Senators: Sheldon Killpack (R, District 21), Peter Knudson (R, 17), Greg Bell (R, 22), and Gene Davis (D, 3), and these Representatives: Dave Clark (R, 74), Roger Barrus (R, 18), Brad Daw (R, 60), Merlynn Newbold (R, 50), Patrick Painter (R, 67), Jackie Biskupski (D, 30), and David Litvack (D, 26). Click [here](#) for a link to the entire list.

Rep. Clark and Sen. Killpack will co-chair the Task Force. The **first meeting is scheduled on Thursday, April 17 from 8:00AM to 12PM at the Capitol in the West building room 20**. To see the agenda and corresponding documents click [here](#). Much will be learned at this first meeting regarding the task force's plans to tackle the 16 points outlined in HB133, the role of the Executive Committee and the public, and the work groups that will be formed. According to the bill, both legislative staff and Executive Committee (Departments under the Governor's office) staff are required to work with the

task force to develop a strategic plan for health system reform and implement certain provisions. While the bill does not require the formation of work groups, UHPP has been told that there will be five to six work groups charged with the task of developing research-driven solutions to the health care system challenges. All of this will be discussed or announced at the first task force meeting. See UHPP's [Recommendations for Reform](#).

There will be many opportunities for the public to be involved. Whether you want to be involved directly or indirectly, UHPP will keep you updated on all the work being done. One of the best ways you can participate now is by sharing your personal experience with the health system. By sharing your story (or introducing us to folks who can tell their story) you help put an actual face to the problems (or successes) with the current system. This is one of the most powerful ways to effect change! To share your story please contact Stacey at 801-433-2299 or [stacey@healthpolicyproject.org](mailto:stacey@healthpolicyproject.org).

## 2. Interim study items (the Interim Session begins Wednesday, April 16!)

The Interim Sessions (every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed. from April thru Nov) enable legislators to delve more deeply into specific issues which may have come up during the General Session. They often serve as a laboratory for legislation which may be introduced in the coming session. Towards the end of the previous session, each legislator submits a list of the topics he or she would like studied during April-November. Below is a list of health-related items of interest from the 2008 Legislature's [Master Study Resolution, SJR 11](#) (we provide brief commentary, where appropriate, in *italics*):

<b>Insurance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ (#73) Access to Health Insurance- to study the effects of ensuring that every Utah citizen, regardless of health status, be able to purchase health insurance available to any other Utah citizen with guaranteed issue and community rating. <i>This topic will be studied as part of HB133 (Health System Reform). UHPP believes community rating is key in ensuring that health coverage is accessible and affordable for everyone in the state and must be a fundamental component of any health reform package.</i></li> <li>▪ (#96) Health Plan Exemption from Selected Requirements - to study allowing insurers to offer health insurance coverage to uninsurable individuals, that is exempt from certain mandates (1st Sub. H.B. 491). <i>UHPP is concerned that removing mandates can lead to watered down coverage that is insufficient in meeting individuals and families' true health care needs.</i></li></ul>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Medicaid</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (#81) Barriers to Medicaid Participation - to study the asset test and other barriers of Medicaid participation, the pros, cons and costs to the state of removing the asset test, and similar barriers to health care coverage. <i>Enrolling all uninsured Utahns who qualify for Medicaid, CHIP or UPP is one of government's primary responsibilities in the health reform process. Since low-wage families typically don't have assets to speak of, the asset test functions as a needless, bureaucratic impediment to covering low-wage families. It also sends families a harmful message: that they should not save their money and build assets.</i></li> <li>▪ (#83) Children's Health - to study the feasibility of establishing a medical home for all children with chronic medical and mental health conditions in Utah.</li> <li>▪ (#85) Comprehensive Care Coordination - to study what amount of reimbursement, training, and education on best practices would be required for primary health care providers to provide comprehensive care coordination within Medicaid. <i>This is the medical home concept that in other states, North Carolina is premier example, have been shown to improve quality and help control costs within Medicaid. In addition, medical homes can be a key cost containment tool for broader health system reform.</i></li> <li>▪ (#100) Medicaid Assistance and Managed Care - to study providing managed care, chronic care management, and other services to Medicaid clients and CHIP recipients (S.B. 133). <i>This also studies how to implement the Medical Home concept in Medicaid and CHIP.</i></li> <li>▪ (#107) Preferred Drug List - to study preferred drug lists: successes, failures, and options. <i>UHPP believes that more savings can be found in Utah's PDL program and then re-invested in improving and sustaining Utah's Medicaid program.</i></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Long-Term Care</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (#84) Community-based Support Structure - to study the community-based support structure: how the state can develop the community infrastructure to support individuals with disabilities and the aging population in an effective manner, and how the state can attract and retain qualified direct care staff to support persons with disabilities and the elderly in the community.</li> <li>▪ (#99) Long-term Care Demographic Shifts - to study how changing demographic factors, including an increasing aging population, influence the need for long-term care change over the lifespan, and how Utah will confront these changes. <i>If framed properly, this item could generate the solid data needed to support a move away from institutional care to community-based settings. Like most worthy initiatives, the effort may require a substantial up front investment in community-based care and related support services.</i></li> <li>▪ (#103) Nursing Homes - to study a Medicare moratorium, reimbursement, and Medicaid beds. <i>This topic reflects the need to keep the committee focused on the shift towards community-based care.</i></li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Health-Care System</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (#82) Billing Practices - to study issues related to hospital billing practices.</li> <li>▪ (#93) Health Care - to study issues related to health care.</li> <li>▪ (#101) Medical Malpractice - to study Medical malpractice reform.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reimbursement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (#86) Contract Provider Pay - to study contract provider pay in the Department of Health and Human Services. <i>Not sure where this came from or what is intended, but sounds like a good idea.</i></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Community Health</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (#104) Obesity - to study expanding obesity prevention programs in Gold Medal Schools and the role of "Utah Partnership for a Healthy Weight." <i>The state's obesity epidemic needs to be systematically addressed through these and similar efforts for the sake of better health outcomes and cost management. The costs to the state associated with obesity are substantial. Obesity is also a health disparities issues in that it disproportionately impacts low-wage families and communities of color.</i></li> <li>▪ (#111) Sexually Transmitted Disease Rate - to study Utah's dramatically increasing rate and how to best educate, prevent, and ensure treatment for those who are infected. <i>This issue needs rigorous study and robust solutions. STDs are a growing threat to the fertility of Utah women.</i></li> <li>▪ (#115) Telepharmacy - to study defining "telepharmacy" (S.B. 291).</li> <li>▪ (#116) Therapy for Sexually Transmitted Diseases - to study expedited partner therapy for sexually transmitted diseases (S.B. 289). <i>See above under #111.</i></li> <li>▪ (#120) Vaccinations-to study reducing health care costs by increasing childhood vaccinations for preventing diseases and increasing awareness of the health benefits of vaccinations to the general public.</li> </ul>

## Health Disparities

- (#94) Health Care for Underserved and Underinsured - to study access to comprehensive primary health care for the medically underserved and underinsured, and the role of community health care centers in expanding cost-effective care and providing a medical home. *Making sure that everyone is included in the system and has access to a medical home is key to improving quality and containing costs in health care. UHPP believes that if these two components are not part of the broad health reform currently being developed, the reforms will be a failure.*
- (#95) Health Disparities - to study issues related to health disparities: review problems and solutions. *Quality and access to health care must be equal for everyone in the state regardless of one's ethnicity, culture, or primary language.*
- (#87) Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) - to study the extent to which the state's health care delivery systems meet the [national CLAS standards](#) and current and proposed efforts to meet those standards.
- (#114) Statewide Standards for Health Care Interpreters - to study requiring the Department of Health to evaluate the effectiveness of health care interpreter services in the state (1st Sub. H.B. 428). *Medical interpreters may be under-utilized in Utah's health care settings and for reasons that are not yet clear. Even less clear is what standards are in place to ensure quality and competence in medical interpreting. The consequences of under-utilization and possibly sub-standard quality can be serious in terms of health outcomes and cost to the taxpayer. Several states have developed quality standards for interpreting with varying results.*

Each interim committee will sort through the items it has been assigned and select those it wishes to investigate further. In addition to choosing what it studies the committee also determines how the issue will be framed and the scope of the questions to be considered. NOW IS THE TIME to make your case to HHS Interim members about items you want studied and how they should be framed. Advocates and policy analysts can also shape decisions about who gets to present the issue to the committee. UHPP is happy to assist community groups with this process. **Interim Committees begin to meet April 16<sup>th</sup> at the Capitol!**

### Committee Schedules

HHS Interim Committee (click [here](#) for agenda) 2:00 PM in Room C250 State Capitol

#### HHS Topics:

2:05 pm Substance Abuse and Misuse

3:00 pm Death Certificate Procedures

3:20 pm Interim Study Agenda

Business and Labor Interim Committee (click [here](#) for agenda) 2:00 PM in Room 25 House Building (West building)

#### Business and Labor Topics:

- Committee Business
- Interim Study Agenda

We will be convening a **meeting of the Utah Medicaid Policy Partnership on April 23 from 12:30 to 2:30pm at AUCH (860 East 4500 South, Suite 206)** to discuss these and other items and to strategize a coherent approach to our never-ending spring and summer work. See you soon!

3. **Health Reform Strategy Session with Len Nichols on April 30<sup>th</sup>**

UHPP is joining with the Governor's Office, the Salt Lake Chamber, AARP, the Association for Utah Community Health, and the United Way of Salt Lake, to bring Len Nichols (see [his bio](#)), health reform expert from the [New America Foundation](#), out to speak on April 30th (Cover the Uninsured Week). See the flyer below for details (if you have trouble reading this flyer, visit our [home page](#))...

# Reforming Utah's Health Care System

A Strategy Session w/Len Nichols of the New America Foundation

Last month the Utah Legislature passed a bill that establishes a framework for drastic health system reform. Specific recommendations on cost, quality, and access will be proposed by a legislative task force and could significantly alter how Utahns receive health care. For reforms of this magnitude, the right strategy is essential for success. Public involvement is critical.



[Len Nichols of the New America Foundation](#), a highly respected healthcare economist, will share his considerable expertise along with lessons from other reforming states. Len's presentation will be followed by a panel discussion with local stakeholders and Q & A. Len will strike a balance between hope for the reform process and realism about just what it takes to bring about reforms that address access, cost, and quality.

**ANYONE INTERESTED IN MAKING SURE REFORMS SUCCEED IN UTAH SHOULD ATTEND.**

**April 30, 2008 2:30-5:30 PM**

**University of Utah**

**Health Sciences Education Building (HSEB)**

**MUST RSVP by April 23 to attend/1st come, 1st served  
SPACE IS LIMITED.**

**Parking instructions & room # will be given w/confirmation of registration. Links to reading suggestions will be given 1 week prior to the event.**

## Event Co- Sponsors



United Ways of Utah



To Register contact Stacey Earle  
Utah Health Policy Project  
801-433-2299  
[stacey@healthpolicyproject.org](mailto:stacey@healthpolicyproject.org)

Feel free to send this invitation on to your contacts. Keep in mind, however, that registration is almost full. We will attempt to broadcast this event.

#### 4. Monthly Meeting Revival

The Utah Health Policy Project (UHPP) and [Utah Community Action Partnership Association \(UCAPA\)](#) have partnered to revive and re-invigorate the "Monthly Meeting"

with the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Workforce Services (DWS). Historically these meetings were sponsored and facilitated by Utah Issues. However, when Utah Issues disbanded last year, the meetings were discontinued.

The loss of the Monthly Meeting has left a gap in the community in terms of our ability to advocate for better programs, better policy and better government. During its distinguished history, dating back over 27 years, Monthly Meeting has proved to be an effective forum to discuss issues and concerns and to work together with department officials toward mutually agreeable policy and programmatic solutions. While a substantial undertaking, the usually constructive results were well worth the effort.

Given the major challenges and opportunities public programs face in the coming years (e.g., health reform, slowing economy, growing population, baby boomers reaching retirement), we believe that restoring the Monthly Meeting would greatly benefit all of us (the departments, advocates, and beneficiaries) as we work on these complex but important issues.

Both the DOH and DWS are open to participating again in these meetings. Before they fully commit, however, the departments have asked that UHPP and UCAPA develop a list of goals and objectives for the Monthly Meeting. In response we have created a draft vision statement and 3 goals (listed below). Because the Monthly Meeting belongs to the entire community, UHPP and UCAPA would like to solicit feedback on these goals and visions from you. Please submit your comments no later than noon on April 14<sup>th</sup> to [lincoln@healthpolicyproject.org](mailto:lincoln@healthpolicyproject.org) or [lance@utahcap.org](mailto:lance@utahcap.org).

**Monthly Meeting Vision Statement:** Citizens and advocates working with government to find public policy solutions to issues that affect Utah families.

**Monthly Meeting Goals:**

1. Take advantage of synergies found in the collaboration of community organizations and advocates working together to build stronger and more efficient public programs and policies.
2. Use the perspective of the community to address concerns and opportunities with the administration of programs and services in a timely and effective manner.
3. Provide an efficient mechanism to increase transparency and share information between the departments and the advocates.

**5. UMPP Retreat April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 12:30 to 2:30pm**

The Utah Medicaid Policy Partnership is meeting on **April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 12:30 to 2:30pm at AUCH (860 East 4500 South, Suite 206)** to discuss the disposition of Medicaid in the health reforms currently under way, the myriad study items to be debated this summer, and to strategize a coherent approach to our never-ending spring and summer work.

If you are interested in Medicaid issues this retreat is a must attend event. With health

reform come great opportunities for Medicaid, but also substantial risks. There is much work to be done to make sure that public programs are strengthened and protected in and beyond the context of reform!

From more information and to RSVP please contact Lincoln at [lincoln@healthpolicyproject.org](mailto:lincoln@healthpolicyproject.org) or 433-2299.

## **6. Call for More Stories!**

In an effort to put a face to the issues surrounding the current health care system, we are seeking the stories of individuals, families and small business owners. This means everyone—starting with the uninsured. If you are currently on Medicaid or PCN, we also need you to voice *your* concerns and/or satisfaction with public programs. If you have insurance through a private carrier and have had trouble with increasing premiums, denial of coverage, etc, we want your stories too! Policymakers are open to lasting solutions to the health care crisis, but it is your stories that will highlight the need for quality, affordable, comprehensive coverage!

Spread the word and tell your friends!

UHPP's Storybank, 'Voices for Change,' will be online next Friday.

To tell your story, please contact Stacey at 801-433-2299 or email [stacey@healthpolicyproject.org](mailto:stacey@healthpolicyproject.org)

## **7. Call for volunteers!**

To strengthen our outreach efforts, we need volunteer assistance. Tasks include data entry, database and relationship maintenance. Volunteering with us can lead to internship opportunities, jobs with UHPP for qualified individuals, letters of recommendation, and more.

For more information, please contact Stacey at 801-433-2299 or email [stacey@healthpolicyproject.org](mailto:stacey@healthpolicyproject.org)

## **8. Community Input Survey & Prize Drawing**

So that we can better serve you during 2008-09, please take 8 minutes to answer a few survey questions. We have a lot of work ahead of us this year, with the passage of numerous health-related bills (HB133, Health System Reform; HB131, Community-Based Self Sufficiency Mini-Grants; HB364, Health Coverage Promotion, and HB326, CHIP Open Enrollment). We have a tremendous opportunity to help all Utahns gain access to quality, affordable health care.

As we nail down our research, policy, and organizing efforts for the coming year, we'd like to know what YOU think. Would you like to get more directly involved in our efforts? What are your priorities for health care? The survey is brief and everyone who completes it before May 23rd gets the chance to win one of the following thank you gifts (each generously donated by our community supporters).

1. Snake Creek Grill in Midway– dinner for 2
2. \$75 Gastronomy Gift Card
3. \$25 Gastronomy Gift Card
4. \$50 Gift Certificate to Mazza Middle Eastern Eatery
5. Utah Symphony Tickets – 2 tickets to any show of the 2008 Season
6. Wasatch Touring Bike or Ski Tune-Up (\$30 Value)
7. Wasatch Touring Bike or Ski Tune-Up (\$30 Value)
8. Certificate for 1-Hour Massage, Utah College of Massage Therapy (\$25 value)

We will hold 8 different prize drawings over the next 4 weeks. If you don't win one drawing, you'll be automatically re-entered in the next one. The sooner you complete the survey, the better your chances! The final deadline for completing the survey is May 23, 2008.

We value your feedback and look forward to hearing from you!

To take the brief survey, click [here](#):

Or here:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=smNF8Q8m6vjhrkjm2s2\\_2bag\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=smNF8Q8m6vjhrkjm2s2_2bag_3d_3d)

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