

THE UTAH HEALTH POLICY PROJECT

# HEALTH MATTERS



## Health Matters E-Newsletter

September 13, 2008

Greetings Health Advocates!

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### 1. UHPP's New Website Goes Live this Tuesday!

This Tuesday at 5:00 PM UHPP's new, redesigned website goes LIVE. Visit [www.healthpolicyproject.org](http://www.healthpolicyproject.org) and see what you think. Our aim with this redesign has been to streamline and simplify navigation, introduce our new logo, update and simplify some of the text (fear not: this particular effort will be ongoing) and generally clean up the look and feel. Have we succeeded? We would welcome feedback on how we can make our website more informative and user-friendly. Please send any feedback on the new website to [judi@healthpolicyproject.org](mailto:judi@healthpolicyproject.org).

### 2. Executive Appropriations Committee hears report on new CHIP/UPP Waiver

This Tuesday, September 16 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm the committee (comprised of

legislative leaders) will hear a brief report on the recently submitted Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Utah Premium Partnership (UPP) waiver. This is mostly a formality, though there might be discussion. Click [here](#) for full agenda. See UHPP's [recent position paper on the new waiver](#).

**3. HHS Appropriations Committee considers health savings accounts for Medicaid, the medical home initiative & *episode of care* pricing for Medicaid (Wednesday, September 15, 1pm in C445 State Capitol)**

HHS has a full agenda that can be found on the committee website by [clicking here](#).

The topic of Health savings accounts for Medicaid is first up on the agenda. Indiana is the only state experimenting with HSA's for their Medicaid population, and the experiment is not playing out well. HSA's appear to cost more than comprehensive Medicaid coverage; they also reduce incentives for Medicaid patients to receive primary care and create a system where people are cycling off and on of insurance. Based on these results, HSAs are in direct conflict with all 3 of the broad goals of Utah's health system reform: to limit health care cost growth, improve the quality of care, and cover the uninsured.

For an overview and critique of the Indiana HSA waiver for Medicaid, see the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' recent paper [Paying More for Less: Healthy Indiana Plan Would Cost More than Medicaid While Providing Inferior Coverage](#). Look for UHPP new position paper on HSAs and Medicaid in the next few days.

The Committee is also scheduled to look at the medical home initiative. The Department of Health has been asked to introduce the medical home concept and to present obstacles the state faces in providing Medicaid beneficiaries a comprehensive medical home.

A *medical home* provides a coherent system of care wherein a primary care provider works with patients, families, and other health care professionals to assist patients in identifying and accessing all needed medical services. It focuses on preventive care and the management of chronic illnesses, thus reducing the need for more costly care such as emergency room visits and hospitalizations. The American Academy of Pediatrics defines a medical home as "a partnership between families and physicians to provide primary care which is accessible, continuous, comprehensive, family-centered, coordinated, compassionate, and culturally effective." For further details click [here](#).

The medical home concept has great potential to contain Medicaid costs and improve the quality of care, particularly for beneficiaries with chronic conditions. However, in Utah the medical home model will require a substantial upfront investment in Utah's primary care infrastructure, starting with increased provider reimbursement rates. The medical home concept will further require Medicaid coverage for preventive/wellness care and a substantial increase in the number of primary care providers in the state.

With revenue shortfalls expected over the coming years, it may be difficult to launch this initiative. We are therefore recommending that health system reforms include a plan for every Utahn, starting with the Medicaid population, to have a medical home by a certain date (to be determined).

Read UHPP position paper on medical homes by [clicking here](#).

#### **4. HHS Interim Committee (2pm, September 17<sup>th</sup>, Room C250, State Capitol)**

HHS Interim will receive an update from the Health Reform Taskforce about the progress it is making in its work to develop a proposal to reform Utah's health care systems.

The committee will also get an update on the Preferred Drug List (PDL). The PDL has been up and running for 10 months now, and already the program is realizing significant savings for Medicaid. These savings are being wisely re-invested in increased Medicaid provider reimbursement rates. However, Utah's program appears to be inefficient when compared to other state PDL programs. In the drug classes currently listed on Utah's PDL program, about 70% of the prescriptions are for the "preferred drug." This compares to around 90% compliance rate in other states. This difference means hundreds of thousands of dollars of savings are being needlessly lost. There are several ways Utah can improve the performance of the PDL program, including provider education and better auditing of the "Dispense as Written" override mechanism. Watch for UHPP's forthcoming *First Year Review of Utah's PDL and Recommendations for Improvement*.

The committee's full agenda and materials can be found by [clicking here](#).

#### **5. Health Reform Task Force Meets Thursday, September 18, 8am in C250, Capitol**

The Health System Reform Task Force will be meeting this Thursday 8am-12pm at the Capitol in room C250. On the [agenda](#) for discussion this month are transparency and value, personal responsibility and public programs. Information on current work in Utah and recommendations from Monday's Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee (see above for more information) will be presented. If you are interested in hearing the conversation but cannot attend you can listen [online](#).

#### **6. Community Work Group of the Health System Reform Task Force goes Statewide**

As part of the Health System Reform Task Force, input is being collected from five stakeholder workgroups: Hospitals, Insurers, Practitioners, Businesses and the Community. As co-conveners of the Community workgroup, the United Way of Salt Lake and the Utah Health Policy Project invite you to take part in a very important statewide discussion about health reform. Recently we held a very successful satellite conference in 5 sites around the state. Thanks to the Association for Utah Community Health, **we are pleased to expand the**

**discussion to several additional communities** (see the list of 10 sites below).

Each workgroup has been asked to generate a proposal for reform. A sub-committee of the Community workgroup has been developing a proposal with the guidance of community feedback. The revised community workgroup proposal, along with responses to collected feedback and the meeting agenda will be sent to participants one week in advance of the September 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Please take a few minutes to review these documents prior to the meeting. This will allow us up to “dig down” deeper into the issues that matter most.

We strongly encourage you to participate in this exciting opportunity to learn more about our state's health care reform efforts and to voice your feedback. The reforms are about all of us. Now is the time to bring YOUR voice into the health care reform debate!

**What: Community Workgroup ‘Satellite’ Meeting**

**When: September 23, 2008 4:00-6:00 PM (You must RSVP: space is very limited)**

**Where: 10 different locations** (*details below*) Reservations will be 1<sup>st</sup> come, 1<sup>st</sup> served: seating is very limited. To reserve a seat, click on the location you prefer (please provide your full name, organizational affiliation, if any, email address, address, and phone # in the body of the message. DO NOT CHANGE THE AUTOMATIC SUBJECT LINE):

1. [Salt Lake 1: University of Utah Health Sciences Building \(HSEB\)](#)
2. [Salt Lake 2: Association for Utah Community Health or AUCH](#)
3. [Logan: Bear River Local Health Department](#)
4. [Ogden: Midtown Community Health Center](#)
5. [Tooele: Tooele County Health Department](#)
6. [Provo: Mountainlands Community Health Center](#)
7. [St. George: Community Health Center of St. George](#)
8. [Blanding: Utah Navajo Health Systems, Inc. Blanding Family Practice](#)
9. [Monument Valley: UNHS, Inc. Monument Valley Community Health Center](#)
10. [Montezuma Creek: UNHS, Inc. Montezuma Creek Community Health](#)

[Center](#)

**TO RSVP** click on the location you prefer above and an email message will be automatically created for you to use. Specific directions will be emailed to you automatically after you RSVP.

Please note: if there is NOT a location near you (we realize this is true for many of you) and you would like to participate in the final satellite meeting on October 7, please send an email to [stacey@healthpolicyproject.org](mailto:stacey@healthpolicyproject.org) (in the subject please write: NEXT MEETING in \_\_\_\_\_ (your town or city)). We will try to arrange a location closer to you.

Feel free to circulate this information. If you have any questions you can also call (801) 433-2299 for Stacey.

**7. UHPP and the SLCC Community Writing Center join forces to help Utahns share their health care stories**

UHPP is collaborating with the SLCC Community Writing Center (CWC) to help people write and share their personal health care coverage story. Whether your story is about being uninsured, experience with a public program, nightmare or wonderful experience with private coverage, we would love to hear from you.

UHPP and CWC will host several workshops this fall where you can learn more about health care reform and get pointers on how to share your story. All workshops will be at the Community Writing Center at Library Square (210 East and 400 South, Suite 8).

- Thursday, October 9 (6-8pm)
- Thursday, November 13 (6-8pm)

To register, please visit [CWC website](#) or call (801) 957-4992.

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