

Conference will address health-care reform

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Like it or not, the reform of Utah's health-care system is under way.

In an effort to make sure all Utahns have a chance to voice their opinions on the coming changes, a second satellite conference in two months has been scheduled at 13 sites around the state.

The Utah Health Policy Project and United Way of Salt Lake have organized the high-tech discussion for 4 to 6 p.m. Sept. 23 in Salt Lake, Murray, Logan, Tooele, St. George, Blanding, Montezuma Creek, Monument Valley, Provo, Ogden, Heber City, Richfield and Vernal.

"The statewide satellite discussions are happening because these reforms are ultimately about all of us," said Judi Hilman, Utah Health Policy Project executive director. "From the reform process each and every Utahn should expect a better quality of care, lower and more predictable costs and the peace of mind that comes from knowing that you are covered no matter what happens."

In order for the reforms to succeed, they must make sense from the ground up in every community, said Rep. David Litvack, D-Salt Lake and a member of the Legislature's Health System Reform Task Force.

The latest effort to reform health care in Utah has been officially under way since the close of the 2008 legislative session, during which several bills addressing the future of health-care quality, access and costs overwhelmingly were approved.

The reform task force is actively gathering community input along with specific policy recommendations. As co-conveners of the community work group (one of five formed by the task force), the United Way of Salt Lake and Utah Health Policy Project engaged the general public along with policymakers, insurance carriers and medical care providers in solution-oriented discussions.

Each work group has been asked to generate proposals and ideas for reform. A subcommittee of the community working group has been trying to develop recommendations for reform that reflect feedback from earlier community discussions.

Those who register for the Sept. 23 teleconference will be given an opportunity to review the subcommittee's responses along with the latest proposals for reform.

"This will free up the participants to dig deeper into the issues that matter most," Hilman said.

The special legislative task force is to meet this Thursday, 8 a.m. to noon, at the Capitol. For agenda items and background information on the reform process, visit le.state.ut.us.

For more information about the satellite conference, contact Hilman or Elizabeth Garbe at 801-433-2299.