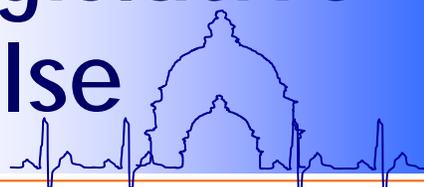


Coordinating health & health care
for a thriving Kansas



3-20-09

Legislative Pulse



Legislative Activities

Tracking the Issues

Clean Indoor Air: The House Health and Human Services Committee voted Wednesday, March 18, to table the "Kansas Indoor Clean Air Act" (S.B. 25). On Thursday, the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee revived the bill by inserting the language into a previously-passed House bill (H.B. 2221).

SCHIP Expansion: On Thursday, March 19, the Senate Ways and Means Committee deleted \$1.2 million that had been proposed for Fiscal Year 2010 to pay the state's share of expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program to cover uninsured children up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level.

(Continued next page)

Health Policy Stakeholders meet to Discuss Kansas HITECH

With funding from the Health Information Security and Privacy Collaboration (HISPC) and in partnership with the Kansas Health Institute (KHI), the Kansas Health Policy Authority yesterday convened a meeting to discuss the Kansas Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) plan.

The meeting involved nearly 100 health policy stakeholders, including health consumers and advocates, doctors and doctors' group representatives, hospital representatives, insurers and purchasers, internet technology professionals and state agency representatives. The group met at the Maner Conference Center in Topeka where they received overviews on HITECH, HISPC, the Kansas Medical Home model and the E-Health Advisory Council.

"It was important to convene as wide a variety of stakeholders as possible to discuss the role that HITECH will play in ongoing health policy initiatives," said Dave Cook, associate vice chancellor of the University of Kansas Medical Center. "We are pleased with the high level of interest in the meeting and grateful that so many talented people are willing to offer their time and energy to the process of developing a cohesive HITECH plan for Kansas."

Following morning presentations, participants were divided into groups where they discussed what additional stakeholders should be involved in the HITECH discussion and what topics needed to be further explored. They also devised three steps for further action by various specialty teams for which participants volunteered following the meeting.

For more information about Kansas HITECH, please visit the KHPA website at: <http://www.khpa.ks.gov/hite/default.htm>

The Kansas Health Information Security and Privacy Collaboration (HISPC) State of the State report has been completed. According to the report's authors, Julie Roth, JD and Christina Stephan, MD, "The potential transformation of health care in terms of quality and cost through the use of health information technology (HIT) and health information exchange (HIE) has been, and continues to be, a high priority at both the federal and state level. In recent years, Kansas has supported the adoption of HIT and HIE through a number of public and private sector activities. The purpose of [the] report is to describe those activities and discuss how Kansas is now uniquely positioned to facilitate the widespread adoption of HIT and HIE within the state." The report may be viewed on the KHPA website at:

<http://www.khpa.ks.gov/legislative/download/2009Testimony/HISPCStateReport.pdf>

Legislative Activities

Tracking the issues

The House Appropriations Committee also did not include that money in its version of the budget bill. Both chambers are expected to vote on their budget packages next week. Supporters of the expansion may offer amendments during House and Senate debate to restore the funding.

State Budget: The House is expected to debate and vote on its budget package beginning Monday, March 23. The Senate is tentatively scheduled to debate its bill Tuesday.

Save the Date

Data Consortium Meeting

Date: March 26
Time: 9 am- 12 pm
Location: Landon State Office Bldg, Room 106

Recession Causing Sharp Rise in Medicaid Applications: KHPA Pressed to Keep Up with Growing Demand

As predicted, the economic downturn is now causing a sharp rise in applications for Medicaid assistance in Kansas, putting a strain on the ability of state Medicaid officials to handle the increased volume.

As a result, the Kansas Health Policy Authority plans to ask lawmakers to restore administrative cuts that are being proposed in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget so it can keep up with the rising workload and prepare for even bigger increases that are expected this fall, when recently laid-off workers begin exhausting their unemployment benefits.

"This recession is causing real pain for families throughout Kansas," said Dr. Marcia Nielsen, executive director of KHPA. "We're now seeing evidence of that in the number of people applying for assistance. As these people struggle to cope with the loss of jobs and income, they are worried about losing health coverage for themselves and their dependents, many for the first time. That's why we're asking lawmakers to reinvest some of the stimulus-related savings money back into our agency so we can maintain adequate staff and contractual services to handle the increased workload."

Since the start of Fiscal Year 2009, the number of new applications and annual reviews for benefits under Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program has grown about 9 percent compared to the previous year, or an average of 987 additional applications per month.

"Given the statewide hiring freeze, no additional staff has been added to accommodate the increased workload," said Dr. Andrew Allison, Medicaid Director at KHPA. "We have already exhausted all potential trade-offs within the terms of the contract and to date over 10,000 applications and reviews remain unprocessed. This represents an increase of about 67 percent over the number of unprocessed applications and reviews reported in July 2008."

The Kansas House and Senate are expected to vote on their respective budget bills next week. Both versions call for cutting KHPA's administrative budget by roughly a 6-percent below the revised FY 2009 level.

KHPA Pulse is a publication by the KHPA Communications Team distributed weekly during the legislative session. If you have questions or comments, contact the Public Information Officer Peter Hancock at 785/296.5603 or peter.hancock@khp.ks.gov