

Policy Option: Health Information Transparency for Consumers

Description: It is proposed that KHPA establish a two phase health information transparency initiative that will (I) initially collect and make available existing health and health care data resources to the Kansas consumer and (II) collect and publicize Kansas specific health care quality and cost information measures developed by the Data Consortium for use by purchasers and consumers.

Phase I: KHPA will establish a partnership with the Kansas state library and other interested libraries and stakeholders to facilitate consumer access to reliable health information to enable consumers to make optimal health care and wellness decisions. KHPA and the libraries consortium will develop a portal to improve access to currently available health information, complete a statewide environmental scan of health information and develop long term initiatives to meet the need of Kansas consumers, and build a health information curriculum to help Kansans on using health information to improve their health and utilization of health care, with a focus on quality and cost. The partnership will then develop a consumer health/healthcare professional portal consistent with the standards established by National Library of Medicine (NLM) to deliver health information to all geographic areas of the State.

Phase II. After the development of Kansas specific health quality and cost measures recommended to the HPA Board by the Data Consortium (which consists of health care stakeholders in Kansas), the KHPA will make available to the public measures allowing consumers to compare cost and quality of health providers and plans. Several other states have such programs, such as Minnesota and Wisconsin, which we can utilize in designing a Kansas specific model.

Background: Transparency in today's health care environment refers to the development of standardized provider performance metrics, outcomes reports, and pricing information to be shared with the public. Consumers currently have limited access to meaningful information from which informed health decisions can be made. As result, there is little assurance that consumers are receiving an optimal return on investment when purchasing health care services. Publishing standard pricing and quality information can empower consumers and purchasers to use resources more efficiently and drive them to providers that offer the highest quality care.

A number of health information library-driven initiatives are underway across the country to facilitate consumer access to health care information. In 2004, the NLM announced that over 40 projects in 24 states were funded to improve consumer access to reliable and authoritative electronic health information. The American Libraries Association (ALA) also announced their partnership with Walgreens in 2004 to promote consumer health education and libraries as a source of health information. Initial efforts focused on providing public libraries with information to increase knowledge and understanding of the Medicare Drug Discount Card Program. Currently, the Medical Library Association (MLA) offers a "User's Guide to Finding and Evaluating Health Information." The guide incorporates the collective wisdom of medical librarians who regularly search the internet for quality information in support of clinical and scientific decision making by doctors, scientists, and other health practitioners.

Cost Estimate:

Phase I: \$150,000 SGF. Cost for library staff to develop portal, development of model search engine for Kansas consumers, and develop curriculum/training for using health information.

Staff Recommendation: Fund phase I of this proposal for FY '08. Further cost estimates will need to be developed for phase II for FY '09 upon development of health indicators of quality and cost information for consumers and purchasers.

Board Action: Motion made, seconded and carried to approve for FY 2008 Enhancement funding.