Legislative Summary of the Wyoming Healthcare Commission Action Plan for 2005 and the first half of 2006

The Wyoming Healthcare Commission envisions a better-organized statewide healthcare system enabling more Wyoming citizens to access higher quality and more affordable care. Our mission is to use fresh, innovative approaches to address the cost, quality and access issues that currently impact the ability of many citizens to get necessary healthcare services.

What

Commission work for the next 18 months will focus in four distinct areas:

1. Wyoming Healthcare System Development
2. Health Benefit Purchasing Pool(s)
3. Information Technology
    a. IT Infrastructure Study
    b. Database Development
4. Medical Errors

1 - The Healthcare System Development subcommittee will continue working on an inventory of existing healthcare resources in the state and try to answer the question: If this is what exists today, what has to change to meet the needs of Wyoming citizens now and in the future? This group will address the *supply side issues*.

2 - The Health Benefit Purchasing Pool(s) subcommittee will address the *demand side* of the equation. The subcommittee investigating the development of one or more purchasing pools will examine how pools can use market influence to address cost and quality issues as well as the role of the pools in developing more sophisticated consumers of healthcare services along with encouraging healthy choices among pool members.

3 - The Information Technology group is currently working to develop an understanding of the state of the State with regard to Electronic Medical Records and other healthcare IT infrastructure. Their work will also outline a plan to help the State create a healthcare IT infrastructure that will serve as the backbone of all future IT and data initiatives. Once that work is done, the Commission believes there is an overarching need to develop a state-wide healthcare database that can be used to help all stakeholders (providers, payers, administrators, regulators, researchers, policy makers, etc.) make more informed decisions.

4 - The Commission's Medical Errors subcommittee is researching what other states or entities have made progress toward reducing medical errors and then examining their programs to recommend best practices. They are also

investigating vehicles to use medical error abatement as a tool to address malpractice costs in the state.

The first two subcommittees were formed during the Commission's work sessions in November and December. The second two subcommittees were created as a result of legislation passed in 2004.

Why

After a year of traveling the state, listening to experts and laymen, reading and studying, the members of the Commission have developed a deep appreciation for how complex the healthcare system is and how difficult it will be to address many of its problems. Many studies, by the Commission and others, have measured the problem and some of the underlying causes.

The Commission believes the State of Wyoming deserves a fresh, innovative approach to the myriad of issues impacting the system. Some potential recommendations the Commission plans to think through carefully over the next year might mean dramatic changes. The goal is real reform that will have a positive impact on the kind of care our citizens receive and how much they have to pay for it.

The Commission also recognizes that any change – no matter how small - will be viewed as threatening to those benefiting from the current system. The Commission's responsibility is to assure that its proposals will lead to fundamental improvements for the citizens of Wyoming. The Commission must also make sure all stakeholders understand the consequences of not making the necessary changes.

Addressing the issues facing our state's heath care system is important if we expect to have the ability to attract businesses to Wyoming and if we expect our younger citizens to stay and make a living and a life here. It is also important to the quality of life and general well being of all our citizens today.

Where can I learn more?

Attached is a budget outlining the Commission's planned activities. Whenever you have questions, feel free to contact Commission Chairman T. Chris Muirhead at 307-265-4311, or our Executive Director, Anne Ladd, at 307-473-3839 (office), 307-262-2550 (cell) or **aladd@state.wy.us**. You can also go to our website: **www.wyominghealthcarecommission.org**.