Opportunities for Improved Health Service Delivery
Healthcare Commission Ideas for Governor Freudenthal
June 29, 2005

Introduction

In March of 2005 the Governor asked the Wyoming Healthcare Commission to develop a "smorgasbord of incremental, tangible, immediately-implementable" ideas to address healthcare issues in Wyoming. This notebook contains the Commission's first set of 18 suggestions developed over the last three months along with an update on the status of WyoCare.

In developing our ideas the Commission has relied on these guiding principles:
1) Address the three main issues - access, quality and cost.
2) Create a system where clinical practice is based on data and evidence.
3) Don't reinvent the wheel.
4) Get the right care to the right person at the right time in the right setting for a fair price.
5) Nobody wins when one group's leverage hurts another group – no cost shifting.
6) Nothing we do in the short-term should make it harder to address the issues of access, quality and cost in the long-term.
7) Strive for more predictability in healthcare costs year-to-year for consumers and payers.

The following suggestions touch on a wide range of topics: delivery system design and infrastructure; prevention and wellness; professional recruitment, retention and training; information technology implementation and adoption; quality improvement and cost reduction. Some have low risk/return ratios; others have relatively high risk/return ratios. Some are simple expansions of existing programs; others include the possibility of creating a new organization to take on new tasks. While we have not have one specific recommendation on what entity should replace the Commission upon our sunset, we do make several recommendations for action that could be undertaken by what we envision as an independent "Federal Reserve Board"-type agency for healthcare in Wyoming.

This notebook also contains a briefing on WyoCare. WyoCare is a concept for a pooled insurance product directed at the uninsured gap that exists primarily among employees of small businesses not covered under commercial plans and those who are covered under publicly funded health plans such as Medicaid and Medicare. Because WyoCare is not yet fine-tuned enough to be considered a formal recommendation, this briefing is intended to educate and to provide an opportunity for the Governor, the Legislature and their respective staff members to provide input and suggestions as the Commission continues to develop WyoCare.

Next Steps: The Wyoming Healthcare Commission expects continue developing the ideas contained in this notebook and to provide the Governor and the Legislature with additional suggestions. The Commission continues to study several issues including recruitment, retention and training of healthcare professionals, small group reinsurance, the potential of joining a multi-state pharmacy purchasing cooperative along with other issues related to healthcare access, quality and cost.

Later this fall the Commission will release two legislatively mandated reports - one on medical errors and the other healthcare information technology. Each report will have recommendations for the Governor and the Legislature to consider.

Finally, the Commission will continue to move forward with its feasibility work on WyoCare. As specific issues are resolved, the Commission will be able to speak with more certainty about the pros and cons of moving forward. At that time, we anticipate submitting extensive material for consideration by the Governor and the Legislature.