



COMMONWEALTH
NORTH

Illuminating Alaska's Issues

HEALTH CARE ACTION GROUP
JULY 16, 2009
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
MINUTES

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting was called to order at 7:05am by Co-chairs Duane Heyman and Tom Nighswander

Members/Guests Present: Brian Richardson, Carolyn Heyman-Layne, Stacey Frost, Matt Dupre, Regan Mattingly, Deb Erickson, Randi Sweet, Pat Luby, Shelley Hughes, Carl Ekstrom, Ted Madsen, Linda Boochever, Rebecca Madison

Staff Members Present: Josh Wilson, Josh Hemsath

2. **Current National Health Care Update – Pat Luby**

- Two committees plan on voting on the Health Care House bill today
 - i. The House Health Care Reform Bill was passed by the Democrats, no Republicans voted or it
- The process has been very open which is good, but it has also happened extremely quick which scares a lot of people
 - i. Senate Finance Committee bill could be out within days, the original date for completion was October
- Today most people are referring to this Health care plan as either the “Public Plan” – Democrats or the “Government Plan” – Republicans
- Ultimately the fighting will be Democrats verses Democrats
- Looking at implementing “pay to play” type programs
- Mark Begich has held two health care forums in Alaska already. Both Senators see this as a big deal
 - i. Senator Begich is concerned about protecting small business and that the benefits do not become so expensive that small business can no longer be Competitive
- Finance Committee has another Health Care Bill and is trying to get bi-partisan support
- Overall the government wants to stay under the trillion dollar mark over 10 years
- Contention points
 - i. Biologic Drugs, very expensive and pharmaceutical companies want 12-14 year patent before anyone can make cheaper chemical ones that work just as well but are much cheaper
 - ii. Long term care: Would become an opt out program, one would pay \$65 a month for long term health benefits of \$50 a day
 - iii. The biggest concern is who is going to pay for it
 - iv. Most of what we hear about his plan is about payments and not structural reform, the concern is that we are only propping up a broken down system
 - v. A lot of people want the government out of health Care

- vi. Medicare
 - Co-ops – traditionally work very well, but the issue is scale, the more people involved the better off they become, on a small scale they typically fail
3. Medicaid Update – Tom Nighswander
 - CMS in review of the State
 - i. Worst they have ever seen anywhere in the country
 - ii. Good people trapped in a poor system
 - People currently in the system will continue to get coverage but new people will not
 - 1,000 people waiting for care right now
 - There is a staff shortage issue as well, we are very far behind on nursing and social work hiring
 4. Electronic Health Records Update
 - Want to lower the cost of health care by adopting a consistent interface
 - The goal now is to help smaller offices adopt electronic records
 - This will help involve the patient as well as allow patients access to their own records
 - Using SB 133, are looking into grants to help offices transfer records to an electronic format
 - There is a huge national push right now to have the nation be exchanging health records electronically by 2014
 - In most cases it is the staff that is pushing this change, not the doctors
 - Just completed a survey which outlines the three greatest barriers to transferring over to electronic records
 - i. Cost
 - ii. Medicare Access
 - iii. The multitude of providers to select from (over 200)
 - Now in the process of selecting 3-5 providers that are best for Alaska and produce this list by the end of September
 - Informing public is the other piece
 5. E-Health Workshop Update
 - Workshop's goal was to locate individuals who want to work with the public to address E-health issues
 - This group met late June with the goal of making electronic health records more plausible to the public
 - Duane Heyman and Carolyn Heyman-Layne are in the process of putting together an op-ed piece
 6. CWN Action Coalition Goals
 - When we met last month we agreed to support the Energy Stimulus money to help make rural Alaskan communities more energy efficient
 - There will be a special Legislative session on August 10th and we should resend our resolution in support of these funds
 - Possibly have this group make a presentation to the Chamber about Health Care and what needs to be done
 - i. Concern: they have a very diverse crowd of large and small business where many member businesses do not provide health care
 - ii. Put things into context, root issues back to past studies, a consistent flow of information
 - The rapid response capabilities of our action group is a great asset to us

- We should stay close to our roots, Commonwealth North has integrity, we are broad based and look at issues on the 100,000 foot level
- We should try to engage small businesses by traveling to rural areas in Alaska
- Need to get a list of important rural communities following us on Twitter
- Develop a state wide modern media list
- Where can we add value - we do not want to duplicate anyone else's effort
- CWN is a policy think tank connecting back to the educational process
- We should not get involved in the National Health Care scene, it is too messy right now
- We should take the initial report off the shelf and bring it up to date

7. Announcements

- Alaskans Coming Together (ACT) is holding a rally in support of National Health Care reform July 25th at 2pm on the park strip
- Recommended Book: "Innovations in Health Care" Clayton Christensen

8. Suggested future meeting topics

- Robert Sewell with Health Planning and Systems Development – who is doing health care policy work for SB 139 for the Health Care Commission
- ISSER Rosyland Frazier, has been studying Medicare and we may want to reference her studies in our report
- UA's Karen Perdue on the health care work force situation in Alaska.
- Denali Commission and the Stimulus money

9. **ADJOURNED** 8:50 am

10. **NEXT MEETING DATE:** August 20th from 7-9am at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Note: We will be meeting the 3rd Thursday of every month from 7-9am