

Visioneering - Unified Legislative Alliance LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL – 2008

Position on Individual Health Management

Four areas of health care that focus on individual health management have been identified by the VW Health Alliance as emerging issues for legislative consideration. These four areas are behavioral change, the built environment, education and responsibility, and Medicaid-provider reimbursement. These emerging issues focus on health care measures that stress individual health actions that promote prevention of disease. These initiatives promote individual behaviors that improve health and prevent disease by reallocating existing resources.

Background of issue (i.e., relevant data, history): At all levels of government, there has been a call for system changes in our health care system. Discussions frequently focus on the areas of health care cost, quality and access, which generally leads to the importance of disease prevention. Keeping people healthier is obviously one of the most effective ways to reduce health care costs and can also affect health care quality and access to care. National data suggests that the United States could save billions of dollars on health care with improved efforts in disease prevention. Research and studies regarding disease prevention indicate implementing proven community-based disease prevention programs could yield a net savings in the United States of 2.8 billion annually and 16 billion over the next 5 years.

To address these issues the Visioneering Wichita Health Alliance, the Wichita Business Coalition on Health Care, the Sedgwick County Health Access project and other related community efforts dedicated to health care system changes have been created. The Visioneering Wichita Health Alliance's membership has focused on this issue by conducting legislative planning sessions with its 60 regional member organizations and a recently sponsored legislative health care forum. From these efforts, a common theme has been a focus on rethinking strategies to disease prevention. For these reasons, the Health Alliance is proposing a position statement on Individual Health Management that focuses on disease prevention.

Describe the regional impact or significance to South Central Kansas: The proposed individual health management initiatives have potential cost saving and health benefits not only for the region but state-wide as well. Using national figures regarding proven community disease prevention programs the Individual Health Management Initiatives could save Kansans approximately 27 million dollars annually and the Wichita MSA approximately \$5 million dollars in annual health care costs. These initiatives address the need for changes in the Kansas Health Care system and will enhance Kansan's quality of health and result in health care cost savings for both workers and employers.

Addressing spiraling health care costs and the growing inability of employers to pay such costs is critical to maintaining the manufacturing employment base of South Central Kansas. More than any other industry, manufacturers must compete globally, and most competitor countries have addressed the health care issue and created systems that are much more cost-effective than in the U.S.

Describe the relationship of the proposal to job growth, per capita income and/or education:

Employers could reduce health care expenses, enhance productivity through reduced absenteeism, disability and other on-the-job health related issues. Employees would not only benefit from improved health but could also see reductions in their individual and family health care costs.

The per-capita income of South Central Kansas relies heavily on the strong manufacturing sector. Systemic changes in the incentives built into the system of health care financing are necessary to help turn around not only cost but also utilization rates. In addition, in order for the system to continue to be a strong public/private partnership, physicians and other private-sector providers must be compensated at rates conducive to them turning a profit, and such compensation systems must incentivize healthy behaviors and preventive practices.

Contact: VW Health Alliance Co-chairs:

Kathy Sexton, City Manager of Derby, 788-3132, kathysexton@derbyweb.com

Jack Brown, Research Instructor KU School of Medicine-Wichita, 293-1837, jbrown4@kumc.edu

Draft of proposed legislation: (if applicable) n/a

Position on Individual Health Management

The Health Alliance proposes a 4 part legislative position that focuses on health care measures that stress individual health actions to promote prevention of disease. The initiatives promote individual behaviors that improve health and prevent disease, often by reallocating existing resources.

1. Incentives to change behaviors:
 - Reimbursement/financial assistance for quitting smoking: drug and/or class reimbursement, onsite smoking cessation classes, support for family members of the insured who want to quit smoking.
 - Reimbursement for asthma education: incentive for doctors/medical providers to provide asthma education in the office so that patients and their families/caregivers understand what asthma is, understand their medications, know how to use peak flow meters and spacers, understand what their triggers are and how to avoid them to reduce frequent ER visits and hospitalizations, reducing health costs to the state, insurers and individuals.
 - Development of incentives within the State Employee Health Insurance plan to encourage healthy behaviors including nutrition, exercise, weight-loss or smoking-cessation classes; a day off after a year of not smoking; and other positive incentives.
 - Implementation of a state-wide tobacco ordinance eliminating smoke in all indoor public places and places of employment with no exemptions and that supersedes local ordinances. This is language associated with a national initiative by the American Lung Association known as Smoke Free 2010.
2. Built Environment
 - Clean outdoor air legislation to make it easier and safer for those patients with compromised lung health to be outdoors and being actively engaged in their own wellness. People with compromised lung health can not go outdoors during periods of high ozone levels or high air pollution days without significant risk to their own health. The people of Kansas need to ensure that the air everyone breathes is healthy and safe to breathe.
 - Healthy Kansans require bike paths, pedestrian-friendly streets (aka Complete Streets) so they have safe bike and pedestrian paths for routes to schools, grocery stores and banks for the everyday needs of our citizens.
 - Signs to identify pathways and encourage the sharing of roadways with pedestrians, cyclists and automobiles.
 - Neighborhood sidewalks, lighting and crosswalks so Kansans feel safe walking and exercising outside.
3. Education & Responsibility
 - Create incentives for enhanced patient and physician communication.
 - Reimbursement for asthma education: incentive for doctors/medical providers to provide asthma education in the office. An example would be a physician/patient developed Asthma Action Plan that would educate patients and their families/caregivers regarding asthma treatment and management.
 - Facilitate physician's ability to refer patients to additional resources in the community to help address chronic diseases. Examples include programs and services available from the Arthritis Foundation, the American Lung Association, and the American Heart Association, as well as local community centers and support groups. These programs often provide clinically proven programs which improve patient knowledge and functioning for little or no expense.
4. Medicaid reimbursement to providers:
 - Refine and communicate with physician practices coding requirements for them to be reimbursed appropriately for time spent both with group visits for education and prevention discussions, as well as individual counseling for prevention and chronic disease management. These refinements should include streamlined and clearly communicated billing procedures that make it easier for physicians and their offices to utilize these methods to work with patients around prevention and disease management.