

Coalition Resists Alaska Health Care Authority

Coalition hires Strategies 360 to help organize opposition, page 2.

Focusing on Mental Health

Washington Health Alliance participates in assessment of mental health care and provides items for action, page 3.

Proven Health Care Cost Reduction Through Strength in Numbers



FEDERAL PROPOSAL TO LOWER DRUG COSTS

A new federal regulation proposed by the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) would create incentives to lower list prices and reduce out-of-pocket spending on prescription medications for people enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid, starting in 2020. Specifically, it targets the rebates paid by pharmaceutical manufacturers to pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), Part D plans, and Medicaid managed care organizations. Under the proposed rule, these discounts would be offered directly to the patients.

The proposed rule applies only to federally funded plans, but many see it as a first step toward broader measures to rein in prescription drug costs, says Fred Brown, the Coalition's executive director.

"The Coalition exists to lower health care costs for our member plans and their participants. We are working closely with our partner, National CooperativeRx, to help disrupt current prescription drug pricing models towards that end."

For its part, National CooperativeRx issued a statement:

While we would strongly welcome an alternative to our current rebate system, it's important to consider all the consequences and provide time for the industry and plan sponsors to adjust. The suggested timeline seems aggressive for such a significant industry change.

National CooperativeRx is closely monitoring this situation and will provide updates as it develops. We

are also continually considering additional ways to add value for membership, including alternative pricing models. For example, we have already begun discussions with CVS/caremark on their new guaranteed net cost model to analyze if it can be of value to our membership.

If the HHS rebate rule does impact the commercial market, the good news is contract renegotiations will be done leveraging the largest PBM purchasing power with CVS/caremark and the Cooperative's 320,000 member lives. We are confident we would achieve a strong outcome.

Read the HHS fact sheet about the proposal. (www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/20190131-fact-sheet.pdf)



COALITION RESISTS ALASKA HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY



Representing more than 100,000 Alaskans

“I hear a lot of concern about the threat of an Alaska Health Care Authority (HCA) as I talk with Coalition members,” says Pat Shier, the Coalition’s Alaska membership representative.

The Pacific Health Coalition shares this concern and is taking steps to address it, from raising awareness to organizing resistance to the proposal being studied by the state legislature.

As Executive Director Fred Brown wrote in a commentary published last summer by the [Alaska Journal of Commerce](#), the Alaska HCA will “increase state spending, grow healthcare costs, and result in less flexible, less effective care.” (www.alaskajournal.com/authors/fred-brown)

Of the HCA options being studied, one would require that as many as 114,000 Alaskans obtain their health care coverage through an HCA. This includes the employees and retirees of all state agencies and corporations, the University of Alaska and all school districts, and potentially all employees and retirees of every political subdivision.

Organizing in Opposition

“As an organization whose member plans represent more than 100,000 Alaskans, we have

OPPOSITION TO HCA WIDESPREAD

An August 2018 survey of registered Alaska voters conducted by Strategies 360 for the Coalition revealed that 51% of voters oppose the very idea of an Alaska Health Care Authority (HCA); 29% oppose it strongly.

When the pollsters told survey takers that an HCA would require people to move their private insurance coverage to a state-run bureaucracy, opposition increased to 58% (34% strongly).

“Even though it appears that more than half of Alaskans already recognize the folly of an HCA, we are determined to expand that number and to advocate for the well-being of every Alaskan,” says Brown.

a responsibility to speak from our own experience about the recklessness of this proposal,” Brown says.

In mid-2018, the Coalition retained the services of Strategies 360 (strategies360.com) to educate and advocate against the creation of an Alaska HCA.

Strategies 360 is a research, public affairs, and communications firm with a 30-year history of making a measurable impact for its clients.

Working with the Coalition’s senior leadership, Strategies 360 has successfully:

- Conducted research to gauge voter knowledge and opinions of an Alaska HCA (See sidebar for initial poll results)
- Promoted media coverage of the flaws in an HCA
- Sharpened the Coalition’s brand and messaging related to the proposal
- Marketed the value of the Coalition in promoting flexible, cost-effective, high-quality health care

Next Steps

In the coming months, the Coalition will continue educating key legislators and influencers in the Dunleavy administration and in the media.

“For example, we want to correct the impression that the Alaska HCA is primarily an issue for public employees and retirees. We strongly believe it will damage the provision of healthcare for everyone,” says Brown. “We welcome participation of member plans in this campaign, and will be reaching out to you as our plans come together.” □

Focusing on Mental Health

One in five American adults—more than 40 million people—has a mental illness or substance use disorder.

Worse yet, more than half of them (56%) do not receive treatment, according to the most recent statistics gathered by the National Institute of Mental Health.

The Washington Health Alliance (the Alliance), to which the Coalition belongs, has joined with National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions to make mental health care a priority. Together, they conducted a performance assessment of health plans and behavioral health organizations in key areas related to treatment of mental health conditions and substance use disorders.

Specifically, the assessment was designed to provide recommended plans of action for health plans and employers to improve access to high quality mental health care and support within both the primary medical care and behavioral health care delivery systems.

“As a member of the Washington Health Alliance,” says Randy Scott, the Coalition’s Washington member representative, “we support this initiative and encourage you to read the report, Achieving Value in Mental Health Support and accompanying action briefs at www.nationalalliancehealth.org/www/initiatives/initiatives-national/workplace-mental-health under Mental Health Resources.”

THE PHC PRODUCTS THAT OFFER MENTAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES

“We help member plans obtain quality mental health care services at a fair price, and want to make sure our members understand the value those services represent for their individual plan participants,” says Scott.

For example, our PPO agreements include the following mental health services at discounted rates:

- **Aetna Behavioral Health** delivers online check-in tools for anxiety, depression and emotional health, educational resources, and a variety of treatment options.
- **Alaska Regional Hospital’s** Emergency Department providers can connect patients with tele-behavioral health resources, and case managers work closely with patients to facilitate in-patient or out-patient follow-up care.

In addition, member plans can sign up for:

- **Teladoc Behavioral Health Care** which connects people with mental health care specialists, from ongoing visits to expert medical opinions, using phone, video, and an online app. Its licensed therapists, psychologists and counselors have provided more than 33 million sessions. ☐

CALENDAR

NATIONAL COOPERATIVERX AND THE PHC ANNUAL MEETING

April 2 and 3, 2019

Hotel Captain Cook
Anchorage, Alaska

Reception:

April 2, starting at 6:00 p.m.

Annual Business Meeting:
April 3 at 8:00 a.m.

THE PACIFIC HEALTH COALITION QUARTERLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

June 19

September 26

November 20 ☐



International Foundation of Employee Benefits (IFEBC) 65th Annual Employee Benefits Conference

October 20 – 23, 2019

San Diego, California ☐





3000 A Street, Suite 300
Anchorage, AK 99503

READ ABOUT FEDERAL PROPOSAL TO LOWER DRUG COSTS, P. 1.

Since 1994, the Pacific Health Coalition (aka HCCMCA) has been helping member health plans control health care costs by negotiating better pricing on health benefits and services than these same plans could achieve on their own. Current member health plans include 27 headquartered in Alaska and 19 headquartered in the Pacific Northwest.

NURSE HELPS CANCER PATIENTS NAVIGATE TREATMENT AT ARH

“Cancer is an overwhelming diagnosis. Most people don’t know what they need to do. That’s where I come in,” explains Amber Setlock, RN, BSN, the oncology nurse navigator at Alaska Regional Hospital (ARH).

ARH’s Oncology Nurse Navigator program connects cancer patients with a caring, knowledgeable nurse, who walks with them through every step of their treatment—at no additional cost.

Setlock works closely with physicians and care teams. “I can help patients communicate their concerns and feel more in control of their own care,” she

explains. “They can choose how much help they want, from my being a resource to call with questions, to an advocate who attends doctor appointments with them, to a friend who sits with them during chemo treatments,” she says.

Nurse Navigator Program Services

Here are some ways the program can help people diagnosed with cancer:

- Schedule and coordinate appointments with medical and radiation oncologists, surgeons, radiologists and others



- Attend appointments with and help explain the treatment plan
- Answer questions and provide information about the patient’s health
- Act as an advocate, voicing concerns to doctors and the care team

To learn more about the Nurse Navigator program at ARH, call the ARH Cancer Center at 907-264-1431.