

Meet the New
Northwest Membership
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Coalition Seasonal Flu
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Proven Health Care Cost Reduction Through Strength in Numbers



COALITION DELIVERS VALUE *BEYOND* COST SAVINGS

During the first quarter of 2021 alone, the Coalition delivered impressive cost savings from just a few of the many services it offers to member plans.

- \$137.8 million in savings for member plans that use the Aetna PPO
- \$4.8 million saved by Renalogic from repricing dialysis costs
- \$734,000 saved on 35 surgeries organized by BridgeHealth

Equally impressive are the “soft benefits” like lobbying and networking that add to the value of Coalition membership.

Making Sure Members’ Voices are Heard

The Coalition speaks up when legislation touches on health care issues of importance to member

plans. “We engage and educate elected officials and regulators in a spirit of cooperation, not confrontation, especially when there may be unintended consequences for our member plans,” said Executive Director Fred Brown.

One recent example is the proposed All-Payer Claims Database legislation (Alaska SB93 and HB 113). These bills would require insurers and providers to disclose cost information, while making disclosure voluntary for other entities. When SB93 was amended to allow for rigorous enforcement of data collection requirements, Brown and the Coalition’s Alaska Membership Representative Pat Shier both testified before the Alaska Senate Finance Committee

about how the requirements could negatively affect Coalition member plans. The bills were set aside for consideration in the 2022 legislative session.

In Washington State, Coalition member plans joined forces to delay action on SB1549, which would fund “foundational public health services.” One of the funding sources would be assessments levied on self-funded trust funds, including many Coalition member trusts. “We will be on the alert to see if this bill is advanced again in 2022 and take appropriate action to protect our member plans and their better-than-average performance from damaging regulatory overreach,” Brown said.

Providing support for legal proceedings on issues that can

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COALITION DELIVERS VALUE BEYOND COST SAVINGS cont'd from page 1.

negatively impact the price and value of healthcare offers another way the Coalition supports our member plans, and their plan participants and families. In the *DaVita v. Amy's Kitchen* litigation, the Coalition filed an amicus brief with the federal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in support of the validity of Renalogic's dialysis pricing methodology which saves participating Coalition member plans millions of dollars each year. In December 2020, the court issued a clear win for Amy's plan and upheld its use of Renalogic's proprietary plan language and methodology.

Educating Each Other

The Coalition leveraged its membership in the National Labor Alliance of Health Care Coalitions (NLA) to open the door to Coalition member plans' participation in a January 2021 webinar that explored the historic settlement of the *In re Blue Shield Antitrust Litigation*. Not only was the discussion highly valuable

from an educational perspective, but it also came to light during that webinar that Taft-Hartley plans were not specifically named among the entities entitled to damages and injunctive relief. Subsequently, David Boies, the lead plaintiff's attorney, and a webinar speaker, made sure that the settlement agreement was amended to clarify any ambiguity about the inclusion of Taft-Hartley plans.

National CooperativeRx (NCRx), the Coalition's pharmacy benefits management provider, is also an education partner. Annually, its executives present valuable, actionable information on prescription medication trends, cost controls for specialty drugs, the use of formularies and other ways to deliver both cost savings and appropriate pharmacy benefits to member plans.

Connecting at Conferences and Membership Meetings

While COVID-19 has limited in-person meetings, the opportunity to share insights and learn

from each other at Coalition membership meetings has continued to thrive remotely. "Our member plans are diverse enough that, if your plan is facing an issue, chances are another Coalition member plan has been in a similar situation. Being able to ask questions, get advice and share concerns is a valuable benefit of Coalition membership," said NW Membership Representative Jeff Owen. (See story p. 2)

The IFEBP (International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans) Annual Conference (see Calendar, p. 3) offers more opportunities to strengthen relationships. The NLA will have a booth in the Exhibit Hall and NCRx will co-sponsor the Coalition's member reception.

"Coalitions like ours are essential to achieve the best price and value for health care benefits and services for workers and their families," said Brown. "That said, there is more to value than price, and we deliver value far beyond cost savings." □



Meet Your New Northwest Membership Rep: Jeff Owen

Jeffery J. Owen, business manager and financial secretary of UA Local 32 Plumbers and Pipefitters in Seattle, is the Coalition's new NW Membership Representative. Owen is also a trustee and chair of the Seattle Area Pipe Trades Health Trust and a trustee of the Washington Building Trades Council.

For Owen, controlling the cost of health care is essential for labor organizations and he appreciates the Coalition's ability to promote that objective. "We all need to have quality medical care available. The Coalition is a place to control the cost of that care for our local medical plans and to network with other labor organizations," he said.

When UA Local 32 hosts the September 2021 Coalition membership meeting (see Calendar, p. 3), Owen says, "We will open our doors and be open to conversations about the positives of being part of a coalition with a goal to deliver the best price and value to labor." □

New Member Spotlight: MIND SPRINGS HEALTH, INC.



Colorado's Western Slope—the part of the state to the west of the Continental Divide—is home to one of the Coalition's newest members, Mind Springs Health, Inc.

Mind Springs Health, a 50-year-old organization, is the Western Slope's largest behavioral health organization, covering more than 23,000 square miles of territory across 10 Colorado counties.

In addition to 12 outpatient behavioral health offices, it operates West Springs Hospital, the only psychiatric inpatient facility between Denver and Salt Lake City. Its Women's Resource Center and Circle Program treat substance abuse.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, its delivery model has shifted to include telehealth. "This proved to be very successful, especially for patients who prefer to receive behavioral health care

from the comfort of their homes," said Stephanie Keister, public relations director/PIO.

Mind Springs is a single employer with about 600 full- and part-time employees. "Like most health care providers—especially in the mental health field—we struggle with recruitment," said Keister. "Being able to offer high-quality, cost-effective benefits helps us remain competitive in the recruitment process. We believe membership in the Coalition will give us support and better pricing for the benefits we offer our staff.

"We've been very impressed with the Coalition's professionalism and deep knowledge of benefits and employment law," she added. "We particularly appreciate the Coalition's connections with insurance carriers and ability to answer questions quickly and efficiently." □

Shier Named NCRx Board Secretary/Treasurer

Having friends in high places is another hidden advantage the Pacific Health Coalition offers its members. That includes Pat Shier, who recently became the secretary-treasurer of the National CooperativeRx (NCRx) Board of Directors. Shier, the Coalition's Alaska membership representative, has served on the NCRx board since 2019.

On accepting the role, Shier noted his "desire to further use the experiences accumulated in my career thus far and continue serving alongside a great group

of folks coalesced around important goals."

Earlier in his career, Shier worked for the University of Alaska Anchorage as its vice chancellor and CFO. He has over 30 years of experience in key financial management positions.

"NCRx has been an important partner for the Coalition, and I look forward to strengthening our ties," Shier said. "I believe that as an individual and as a representative of the Coalition, I can bring a unique perspective to this new role." □

Blue Cross Settlement Claims Due in November

Eligible plans have until Friday, Nov. 5 to file their claim in the Blue Cross Blue Shield Settlement.

You may use your unique ID number sent to eligible class members this past summer. Please go to the claims administrator's website for details and/or assistance: bcbssettlement.com.

CALENDAR

THE PACIFIC HEALTH COALITION MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

- September 23
UA Local 32
597 Monster Rd. SW #213
Renton, WA
- November 18 TBA □

All virtual meetings will be held by videoconference through Microsoft Teams. Invitations and meeting materials will be distributed via email in advance of the meeting date, including instructions about how to attend. If you have more questions about how to attend by videoconference, please contact Fred Brown or Pat Shier at info@phcoalition.org or 888-474-4226.

INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS (IFEBP) 67TH ANNUAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS CONFERENCE

- October 17 – 20, 2021
- Denver, Colorado □

3000 A Street, Suite 300
Anchorage, AK 99503

**READ ABOUT
OUR NEWEST MEMBER, MIND
SPRINGS HEALTH, INC., P. 3.**

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. Currently, there are 50 health plans participating throughout the United States.

Share Flu Shot Deadlines with Your Plan Participants!

The Coalition is offering member plans two ways to protect their eligible participants and dependents from the seasonal flu: vaccine vouchers and drive-through clinics. Both are 100% paid for by the Coalition. There is no cost to participating member plans, their eligible participants, or eligible dependents.

Eligible plan participants **MUST** pre-register at coalitionhealthfair.org to receive a voucher or to go to a drive-through clinic.

Vouchers

Pre-registration for flu shot vouchers required before: Friday, Oct. 15, 2021

Vouchers must be redeemed no later than: Monday, Nov. 15, 2021.

Drive-Through Flu Shot Clinics

Here are the locations, pre-registration dates and clinic dates for the drive-through flu shot clinics paid for by the Coalition, including multiple clinics in some Alaska locations. Eligible participants must attend the clinic they pre-registered for.

Drive-Through Flu Shot Clinics Locations:

Location	Pre-Registration Deadline	Clinic Date
Anchorage, AK	Wednesday, Sept. 22	Wednesday, Sept. 29
Anchorage, AK	Saturday, Oct. 2	Saturday, Oct. 9
Anchorage, AK	Tuesday, Oct. 5	Tuesday, Oct. 12
Fairbanks, AK	Saturday, Sept. 11	Saturday, Sept. 18
Fairbanks, AK	Monday, Sept 13	Monday, Sept. 20
Mat-Su, AK	Saturday, Sept. 25	Saturday, Oct. 2
Soldotna, AK	Wednesday, Sept. 29	Wednesday, Oct. 6