

Keeping Health Care Affordable For Workers And Their Families

HCCMCA JOINS WASHINGTON HEALTH ALLIANCE

Joining the powerful Washington Health Alliance, said HCCMCA's Executive Director Fred Brown, "is another way of demonstrating our commitment to expanding our presence in the Pacific Northwest. Our mission and that of the Alliance are mutually supportive." HCCMCA joined the Alliance earlier this year in partnership with Coalition member, the Seattle Area Plumbers and Pipefitters Health Trust.

The 10-year-old Washington Health Alliance (formerly known as the Puget Sound Health Alliance), brings together organizations across the health care spectrum "to promote health and improve quality and affordability by reducing overuse, underuse and misuse of health care services." Among its more than 175 members are state, county and private employers, union trusts, health plans, hospitals and physician groups, government agencies, community-based organizations, educational institutions, pharmaceutical companies and individuals.

The Alliance's three high-priority strategic goals—to reduce the cost, the underuse of effective care and the overuse of unnecessary care—track well with the HCCMCA's efforts on behalf of our membership, according to Brown. "Being part of the Alliance also supports our belief that improving health care requires a broad-based approach."

The 11-member staff and committees comprised of Alliance members create newsletters, reports and



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education materials addressing topics such as health-care quality, best practices, value-based plan design and the economics of health care. For example, its annual Community Checkup has become a trustworthy source of unbiased data about the quality of health care being delivered in the Puget Sound region.

Washington Health Alliance Executive Director Mary McWilliams will appear at the 2014 HCCMCA and National CooperativeRx meeting. Among other things, she will describe the Alliance's purchaser guidelines for accountable care organizations and its Choosing Wisely program, which aims to help physicians and patients make "smart and effective care choices."

Learn more about the Alliance at wahealthalliance.org. ■

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CONVENIENT, COST-EFFECTIVE COALITION HEALTH CENTER WELCOMING PATIENTS



Convenience and personal, cost-effective care are some of the things people like about the new Coalition Health Center. The Center opened on Nov. 6, 2013, and as of Feb. 15, 2014, had already logged more than 660 patient visits.

“One of my favorite things about the Center is not having to worry about a provider billing me for charges over what’s considered Usual, Customary and Reasonable,” said Autumn Veal, Health Program manager, ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 and Center patient. Certainty about the cost of services is part of the agreement the Health Care Cost Management Coalition of Alaska (HCCMCA) negotiated with h2u (Health to You), the firm that manages the Center.

“The Coalition Health Center is designed to operate without profit for the benefit of our member health plans,” said Fred Brown, HCCMCA executive director. “Participating plans profit in two ways: Their

members pay less for health care services at the Center, and because we expect people will use the Center instead of going to the emergency room—which always costs more—the plans will save money as well.”

Array of Services Delivered with a Personal Touch

The Coalition Health Center is staffed by fully qualified, lower cost, mid-level practitioners. Services include:

- Treatment for common non-work-related injuries and acute/episodic illnesses, including symptom relief, diagnostic tests, laboratory services, care coordination and specialist referrals

- Preventive care services, including wellness visits, physicals, immunizations, lab tests and tobacco cessation services
- Generic and pre-packaged medications
- Chronic condition management

Veal also appreciated her office visit with one of the nurse practitioners who staff the Center. “Unlike so many physicians, they aren’t constrained by a 15-minute limit for

an office visit. I feel like the nurse practitioners put my health and wellness needs first,” she said, “Plus, they often have a better bedside manner!”

Convenience is built into the Center in several ways. It is centrally located on the Alaska Regional Hospital campus in Anchorage and its extended hours mean people don’t have to take time off work to get health

care. Because the Center is open only to members of participating HCCMCA member health plans, there is less waiting. In addition, the entire family can get care in a single location, including children older than two. Finally, the onsite pharmacy means one less stop to make.

The Center is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday to Friday and 8 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays.

To learn more about how your health plan would benefit from the Coalition Health Center, go to the programs page on hccmca.org or visit the Center’s website at coalitionhealthcenter.com. ■



NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: RETAIL STORE EMPLOYEES HEALTH & WELFARE TRUST



The HCCMCA has another UFCW local among its members. Local 368A of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union represents retail store clerks and meat cutters in Idaho. Earlier in 2013, UFCW Local 1439, representing workers in Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho and Northeastern Oregon, joined the Coalition. "We're very pleased to expand our membership both geographically and in terms of a new industry," said Fred Brown, HCCMCA executive director.

"With more employers cutting back on hours, fewer of our members are eligible for health benefits, and those who remain eligible want to get the best value for the dollar,"

said Tony Jensen of JAS Benefits, the local's third-party administrator. "Joining HCCMCA is one way to do that."

The Local 368A Health & Welfare Trust takes care of more than 600 eligible members and their families. Therefore, the Coalition's greater negotiating power and wider reach across the Pacific Northwest are distinct advantages for the smaller local. "Unions are built on the belief of power in numbers. Being part of the Coalition gives us access to benefits that would have been out of reach otherwise. We believe we can obtain better, more cost-effective coverage for our members through the Coalition," Jensen concluded. ■

CALENDAR

NATIONAL COOPERATIVERx AND HCCMCA ANNUAL MEETING

March 25 & 26, 2014
Hotel Captain Cook
Anchorage, Alaska ■

INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – 60TH U.S. ANNUAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS CONFERENCE

October 12 – 15
Boston ■

2014 ANNUAL HEALTH FAIR SCHEDULE TO DATE

Washington:

- Tri-Cities – September 27
- Spokane – October 4
- Bothell – October 25
- Kent – November 1

Alaska:

- Mat-Su – September 27
- Anchorage – October 4 & 5
- Soldotna – October 18
- Juneau – October 18
- Fairbanks – October 25 & 26
- Anchorage – November 8 & 9 ■

Signed, Sealed and Now Delivering Quality Care



Last November, HCCMCA Executive Director Fred Brown (seated, left) and Norman Seabrooks, president, Aetna Northwest Market (right), signed the Coalition's new PPO agreement. As of Feb. 15, 2014, eleven member health plans had chosen to use the Aetna PPO. The new agreement delivers

significant cost discounts, a broad provider network, cost containment services, a robust online tool (Aetna Navigator) to help people select providers and various optional programs. ■

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READ ABOUT

HOW JOINING THE WASHINGTON
HEALTH ALLIANCE WILL EXTEND THE
HCCMCA'S REACH AND COMMITMENT
TO THE NORTHWEST.

Since 1994, the Health Care Cost Management Corporation of Alaska, Inc. (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 23 headquartered in Alaska and 13 headquartered in the Pacific Northwest.

HEALTH FAIRS SATISFY 99% OF ATTENDEES

Two years ago, the test results Kathy Dugan received at the annual Health Fair were, in her words, “all out of whack.” She changed her routine to include more exercise, improved her diet and generally took control of her wellbeing. As a result, her test results at the 2013 Health Fair were “the best I’ve seen in a long time. I’m in great shape for my age group.”

Dugan, a lead Business Support Specialist for Alaska Communications Collections Department, is just one of the thousands who understand the benefits of getting annual blood work, basic diagnostic tests and flu shots at the free Health Fairs sponsored by the HCCMCA and supported by partners like National CooperativeRx. “Besides saving myself the expense of the tests,

doing my best to stay healthy helps keep costs down for everyone in the Alaska Electrical Health & Welfare Fund,” Dugan said.

Everyone Appreciates Comprehensive Test Results

Once again, blood work, thyroid and vitamin D testing and flu shots led the hit parade at the Health Fairs. The fairs were held between late September and early November 2013 at 9 locations in Alaska and Washington and 4,904 people took advantage of the free screenings and health information available.

“My physician appreciates how comprehensive the test results I get from the Health Fair are, and I appreciate being able to get so much done—including a flu shot—

at one place, and on a weekend,” said Beverly Leslie, an airport leasing specialist with the Alaska Department of Transportation. “Besides, it’s fun to see what they have as giveaways each year. I always come home with something useful.”

Attendees named three things that go together—healthy eating, exercise and weight management—as the health topics of greatest interest to them. Stress management also got high rankings. Of the people who completed comment cards, 93% rated the 2013 Health Fair “excellent” or “very good” overall.

Overall attendance was down 2% from 2012, a decrease that some attribute to Fairbanks’ health fair being scheduled in early September, which conflicted with the local hunting season. That fair will be held in October this year. ■