

Current health care initiatives for consideration by the 2007 Legislature

Providers and Facilities

1. Certificate of Need Task Force (E2SHB 1688 (2005))

A sixteen-member task force, created to study and prepare recommendations related to improving and updating the certificate of need (CON) program. Specific issues to be addressed include: the scope of facilities, services and capital expenditures that should be subject to CON; the criteria for reviewing CON applications; the need for service and facility specific policies to guide CON decisions; the purpose of the CON program; the timeliness and consistency of CON decisions; and mechanisms to monitor commitments made by health care facilities.

In developing its recommendations, the task force is to consider the results of a performance audit of the Department of Health's administration of the CON program, to be completed by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee by July, 2006.

Report due: November 1, 2006

2. Department of Health Study of Alternatives for Funding the Regulation of Health Professions (SHB 2974 (Sec. 221(29) (2006))

The Department of Health will evaluate alternative models for funding the regulation of the health professions, including charging an equivalent fee for all licensed, certified, and registered health professions. The department will provide a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature on the potential fiscal and programmatic benefits and challenges of such alternative models.

Report due: December 1, 2006

3. Registered Counselor Task Force

Governor Gregoire has asked the Department of Health to convene a short-term task force to study the registered counselor credential. The current statute provides no specific education, experience or examination requirements. The task force will study alternatives and improvements to the current statutory framework.

Report due: September 1, 2006

4. Health Information Infrastructure Advisory Board (SSB 5064 (2005))

The board is to collaborate with the Health Care Authority to develop a strategy for the adoption and use of electronic medical records and health information technologies in the state that are consistent with emerging national standards and promote interoperability of health information systems.

Report due: Interim status report due December 1, 2005; final report of findings and recommendations due December 1, 2006

Public Health

5. Joint Select Committee on Public Health Financing (EHCR 4410 (2005))

This committee consists of four Senators and four Representatives and is charged with reviewing all current and potential local, state, and federal funding sources and expenditures for public health services and recommend potential sources of future funding for public health services. The recommendation must include methods to ensure that such funding does not supplant existing federal, state, and local funds received by any element of the public health system.

Report due: July 1, 2006

6. Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee Performance Audit of the Department of Health's Public Health Mission

This performance audit will examine the various facets of the state's public health system. It will primarily focus on reviewing the Department of Health's role in preserving public health throughout the state by examining its activities for certain public health-related responsibilities, and reviewing its relationship with the state's local health jurisdictions.

Report due: December, 2006

7. Department of Health Report on Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening (SSB 6090, Sec. 221(13) (2005))

The medical advisory committee to the early detection breast and cervical cancer screening program shall study and recommend strategies for adopting emerging technologies and best practices from the national, state, and local levels in the field of early prevention and detection for breast and cervical cancer, and assist the early detection breast and cervical cancer screening program in implementing policy that follows the best practices of high quality health care for clinical, diagnostic, preventative, pathologic, radiological, and oncology services.

Report due: December 15, 2006

8. Department of Health Family Planning Pilot Project for Low Income Women (SSB 6090, Sec. 221(9) (2005) and ESSB 6386. Sec. 221(9) (2006))

The Department of Health will implement a multi-year pilot project covering Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Franklin, Okanogan and Skagit counties for persons with household income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level who are ineligible for family planning services through the Medicaid program.

Report due: Preliminary report due January 1, 2006; final report due January 1, 2007

State Purchased Health Care

9. Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee Study of the Basic Health Plan (SSB 6090, Sec. 103 (2005))

Part 1 of the study examines the extent to which the Basic Health Plan (BHP) promotes or discourages the provision of appropriate, high-quality, cost-effective care to BHP enrollees. Part 2 of the study will examine the characteristics of individuals enrolled in the BHP, and their use of health care services.

Report due: Part 1 due December 2005; part 2 due July 2006

10. DSHS Study of Medicaid Hospital Reimbursement (SSB 6090, Sec. 209 (2005))

The Department of Social and Health Services Medical Assistance Administration is to contract for an independent analysis of the medical assistance administration's current system for establishing hospital inpatient payment rates, and for recommendations on a new or updated system.

Report due: Interim report due December 1, 2005; final report due November 15, 2006

11. DSHS Report on Provider Incentives to Serve Public Program Enrollees (SSB 6090, Sec. 209 (2005))

The Department of Social and Health Services, in consultation with the Department of Revenue and the Health Care Authority, will report to the health care and fiscal committees of the legislature on options for providing financial incentives for private practice physicians to serve uninsured, Medicare, and Medicaid patients. The report shall include an assessment of the relative costs and effectiveness of strategies including, but not limited to, tax credits and payment rate increases. The report will suggest alternative mechanisms and thresholds for varying tax credits and payment enhancements according to the extent to which a provider serves uninsured, Medicare, and Medicaid patients.

Report due: November 15, 2006

12. Pay-for-Performance Purchasing Project (SSB 6090, Sec. 213(7)) (See also SHB 1512) (2005)

The Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Labor and Industries and the Health Care Authority in collaboration with affected health care providers, facilities, and contracted health plans, will design and implement a joint health purchasing project that links payment to health care provider or facility performance, particularly where such performance is expected to improve patient outcomes or where there are wide variations in clinical practice used to treat a condition or illness. The agencies shall

report to relevant policy and fiscal committees of the legislature on the status of the purchasing project, including actual and anticipated savings.

Report due: December 1, 2006

13. Report on the Employment Status of Basic Health Plan and Medicaid Enrollees (ESHB 3079 (2006))

The Health Care Authority and the Department of Social and Health Services must submit a report to the Legislature on the employment status of enrollees of the Basic Health Plan and medical assistance recipients.

Report due: November 15, 2006

14. State Auditor Health Care Services Performance Audit

As one of its initial state government audits to be completed pursuant to Initiative 900, the State Auditor will conduct a comprehensive audit of health care services, including the operations of and the services administered by DSHS' Medical Assistance and Health and Rehabilitative Services administrations.

Report due: Audit work projected to begin by November 2006; anticipated completion by September 2007

Commercial Insurance Market

15. Office of the Insurance Commissioner Forum on Retainer Medicine

The Office of the Insurance Commissioner has initiated a formal stakeholder process intended to support the development of request legislation for the 2007 legislative session that creates a practical and appropriate level of regulation for retainer health care practices in Washington State.

16. Office of the Insurance Commissioner Report on Individual Insurance Purchasing Pools (HB 2972 (2006))

HB 2972 changes how premiums may be calculated for individual health insurance plans purchased by members of a purchasing pool meeting certain requirements, including the requirement that multiple employers be able to contribute to the purchase of insurance for a single employee who works, most likely part-time, for each of them. Before any actions may be taken under the act, the Insurance Commissioner is required to obtain a federal opinion as to the legality of the purchasing pools it authorizes.

Report due: OIC must request the opinion no later than August 1, 2006. It must report to the legislature assessing the legality and potential impact of these purchasing pools within thirty days of receipt of the opinion.

17. Health Care Authority Small Business Assistance Program (E2SHB 2572 (2005))

The Health Care Authority is to establish a Small Employer Health Insurance Partnership Program. It will provide premium subsidies to eligible employees who are employed by an employer who offers health coverage that has an actuarial value equivalent to that of the Basic Health Plan benefit, and the small employer agrees to pay at least 40 percent of the monthly premium cost for their employees.

The Department of Social and Health Services is directed to seek a federal waiver allowing the use of the state's unspent federal State Children's Health Insurance allotment to cover the cost of parents enrolled in the Basic Health Plan or Medicaid, with the resulting state savings used to expand enrollment in the Basic Health Plan, or in this new small employer program.

In August 2005, the Health Care Authority was also awarded a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to study the further development of small business health care assistance programs in this state. The final report from this project is due in the Fall of 2006.

Long-Term Care

18. Joint Legislative and Executive Task Force on Long-Term Care Financing and Chronic Care Management (2SHB 1220 (2005))

An eight-member task force directed to make recommendations regarding long-term care system capacity, efficient and effective public funding models, appropriate statutory and regulatory revisions, private payment options, and the long-term care needs of rural communities. The task force is also charged with recommending chronic care management and disability prevention interventions.

Report due: Initial findings due January 1, 2006; Recommendations due January 1, 2007; Final report due June 30, 2007

19. Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force (SB 5311 (2005))

This fourteen-member task force is charged with reviewing the available literature and consulting with experts to gain an understanding of the causes of autism and its incidence in Washington; assessing the availability of services currently provided for early screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism; assessing the availability of services to assist families of individuals with autism; and reviewing the effectiveness of programs and services provided to individuals with autism and their families.

Report due: December 1, 2006

20. Joint Legislative and Executive Task Force on Mental Health Services Delivery and Financing (E2SHB 1290, Sec. 14 (2005))

An eight member task force directed to oversee and make recommendations related to: (1) the reorganization of the DSHS administrative structure; (2) the standards and correction process and procurement process; (3) the current funding distribution methodology; (4) serving the needs of nonmedicaid consumers for priority populations; (5) inpatient psychiatric hospital and community residential beds needed to serve persons with a mental illness.

Report due: Initial findings and recommendations due January 1, 2006; final findings and recommendations due by June 30, 2007.

Other

21. Health Care Coverage for Children (E2SHB 1441 (2005))

The 2005 legislature stated its intent that all children in the state of Washington have health care coverage by 2010, to be accomplished by building upon and strengthening the successes of private health insurance coverage and publicly supported children's health insurance programs in Washington state. Access to coverage should be streamlined and efficient, with reductions in unnecessary administrative costs and mechanisms to expeditiously link children with a medical home.