State Legislative Panelists Confirmed For Advocacy Day, April 28
Over 750 registered already; make plans to join them!

Advocacy Day 2015 is just four weeks away, and registrations are already over 750. Help WHA break all records this year by registering your group today. Advocacy Day attendees will hear from our always-popular bipartisan legislative panel. Confirmed panelists include: Sen. Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls), Sen. Jen Shilling (D-La Crosse), Rep. Joe Sanfelippo (R-West Allis) and Rep. Peter Barca (D-Kenosha).

Harsdorf is one of 16 members on the State Legislature’s powerful budget-writing Joint Finance Committee, which currently has jurisdiction over the state’s biennial budget bill. Shilling serves as the Senate Minority Leader and leads the Democrats (continued on page 5)

Medicaid In The Spotlight
Is Your Hospital a Medicaid DSH Hospital?

WHA’s past “Spotlights” highlighted Medicaid program underfunding, which has led to unreimbursed costs for hospitals in the amount of an annual $960 million “hidden health care tax.” This is due to the state’s Medicaid program reimbursing hospitals far less than the actual cost of providing care (about 65 percent of cost). In order to begin to address that pay disparity and cut the hidden health care tax on our state’s businesses, Wisconsin re-established a program known as the Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) program. The DSH program is important to communities all across the state, but Wisconsin’s DSH program still remains one of the smallest in the nation and it is only a temporary, two-year appropriation.

Take a look at the map. Is your hospital a Wisconsin Medicaid DSH hospital? If so, contact your local state legislator and ask them to strengthen the Medicaid DSH program by increasing it and making it a permanent appropriation.

Email your legislator here: https://www.votervoice.net/WIHA/Address
WHA Testifies at Public Hearing on Intoxicated Co-sleeping Bill

On April 1, the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services held a public hearing on Senate Bill (SB) 46 that would mandate by statute that health care providers deliver educational materials to expected mothers on the dangers of intoxicated bed sharing. If this information was not provided during pregnancy, or if the act of providing such information cannot be found in the medical records, hospital-based health care providers must provide this information during the post-partum stay and document that it has been done. Additionally, SB 46 makes it a Class D felony if the act of co-sleeping while intoxicated results in the death of the infant.

The bill is authored by Rep. Samantha Kerkman (R-Kenosha) who testified in support of her bill and stated the legislation was prompted by her local district attorney after he brought forth a case involving an intoxicated father who was co-sleeping with his infant. This incident resulted in the death of the infant. Kyle O’Brien, WHA senior vice president, government relations, and Steven Rush, WHA vice president, workforce and clinical practice, testified on behalf of the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA). WHA opposes SB 46 on many points, but primarily because of the mandate that would require health care providers speak to all mothers about this very sensitive subject regardless of identified need.

“While Wisconsin hospitals are in agreement with the important goal of this legislation, which aims to educate parents and caregivers and to keep newborns safe, establishing the practice of medicine and determining hospital operations through a legislative mandate is a policy that WHA opposes,” stated Rush in his testimony. He added, “to require teaching time be spent, not on the greatest needs as assessed by clinical staff, but on other government mandated topics, risks that necessary teaching might be compromised or missed entirely.” Rush shared with the Committee key initiatives and approaches Wisconsin hospitals are already providing mothers and families of newborns such as:

- Communication with prenatal care providers can identify mothers and babies with special need for intervention related to safety and care;
- Admission processes may trigger consultation with hospital and outside social work staff who can provide or continue contacts with community resources;
- Routine assessments of mother-baby interaction and all family interactions allow for potential issues to be identified early; (continued on page 3)
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- One-on-one teaching and small classes are offered that cover child care, safety, nutrition and resources available in the community;
- Discharge planning often creates referrals to outside agencies, sometimes for further in-home evaluation of risk, sometimes for intervention;
- Post-delivery classes, mailing packets and follow-up phone calls give new parents the opportunity to ask questions and seek help when the reality of child care becomes apparent; and,
- Public health campaigns that promote safe sleeping practices.

Other key stakeholders who testified included the Wisconsin Medical Society, the Wisconsin Alliance on Women’s Health, the City of Milwaukee Health Department, and the Children’s Health Alliance of Wisconsin. None of these stakeholders testified in support of the bill.

In his later testimony, O’Brien reaffirmed WHA’s commitment to working with lawmakers and public policy groups when it provides Wisconsin hospitals safe, evidence-based solutions to important health care needs.

Rush echoed O’Brien’s statement in his closing remarks. “Although each hospital determines its own strategies for assessing, educating and referring parents and their newborns, all are committed to the goal of safe, healthy children in Wisconsin.”

Reminder: Complete Membership Survey Today

As a reminder, one executive at each member hospital and health system has been invited to complete the WHA membership survey. If you received that invitation, complete the survey by April 24. Just 10 minutes of your time will provide feedback that is essential to tee up the future priorities of the Association.

Member participation in the survey is critical to the success of this effort. Significant participation, followed by incorporation of survey findings into WHA’s current and future programming, can only enhance member value. This is your opportunity to rate WHA’s effectiveness and value. Please take full advantage of it and provide your feedback. If you have any questions about the member survey, contact Jennifer Frank at jfrank@wha.org or at 608-274-1820.

Senate Committee Hears Private Ambulance Tax Refund Intercept Bill

Wisconsin’s Senate Committee on Revenue, Financial Institutions, and Rural Issues held a public hearing on Senate Bill 40 that allows private ambulance services on contract with a county or municipality to utilize the state Tax Refund Intercept Program (TRIP) for debt owed by an individual from a government-operated 911 service call. Counties and municipalities with public ambulance services can already utilize the TRIP program to recover debt owed by an individual who utilizes emergency 911 services.

The TRIP program allows a county or municipality to certify certain debt to the State Department of Revenue (DOR), resulting in DOR reducing the size of an individual’s income tax refund to collect on this debt. Under current law, private ambulance services are unable to use the TRIP process even though they are providing emergency services on behalf of a local unit of government. The DOR provided testimony stating that ambulance service providers can require that municipalities enter into agreements where the municipality would bear the risk of unpaid services.

The Committee heard from several ambulance providers who supported the legislation. WHA registered in favor of the bill at the Committee hearing.

The DOR testified in opposition to the expansion of the TRIP program to private entities, but did endorse an amendment to the bill that would require that an ambulance provider enter into a contract with a municipality in order to qualify for the TRIP program. The lead author of the bill, Sen. Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls), has introduced this amendment.
Grassroots Spotlight

Columbia St. Mary’s Hosts Area Legislators

Columbia St. Mary’s Hospital (CSM) in Milwaukee recently hosted Sen. Chris Larson and Rep. Jonathan Brostoff at the hospital. The visit allowed CSM President/CEO Travis Andersen and other members of the CSM leadership team to provide Larson and Brostoff with a tour of the hospital and insight into a variety of important services provided.


WHIO Launches MyHealthWI.org

Public reporting of health care data helps patients and families

On March 23, the Wisconsin Health Information Organization (WHIO) launched MyHealthWI.org, a website designed to help patients and their families take a more active, informed role in their own health care and make value-based health care choices. Data on MyHealthWI.org show how clinics in the state measure up to recognized benchmarks of care and how providers compare to like providers in other areas of Wisconsin.

The site also provides useful information on how patients can better communicate with their doctor and get the most out of their doctor visit and follow-up care.

Initially, MyHealthWI.org provides ratings in fields of internal medicine, family medicine and pediatrics. More specialties will be added in subsequent versions and updates.

MyHealthWI.org offers ratings drawn from WHIO’s Datamart, the only statewide All-Payer Claims Database (APCD) in the country that is voluntary—not mandated by legislation. The WHIO data does not contain any patient names or other information that would identify them. All patient privacy is protected.

MyHealthWI.org was developed with the support of WHIO’s members and subscribers who include all of Wisconsin’s major health care provider groups and insurers. In 2014, Gov. Scott Walker also included substantial funds to support development of the site in his budget.

WHA was a founding member of WHIO. Steve Brenton, WHA senior policy advisor, who serves on the WHIO Board of Directors and is a former chair of the organization noted, “Much like WHA’s CheckPoint and PricePoint (www.wiCheckPoint.org and www.wiPricePoint.org), this new website represents Wisconsin’s strong commitment to developing transparency tools that will accelerate value-based health care.”
Register Now for Healthy Hospitals and Clinics Forum, June 5

Registration is now open for the “What Health Looks Like: Healthy Food and Beverages in Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics” forum, scheduled Friday, June 5, 2015 at the Sheraton Hotel in Madison, WI.

The Forum serves as a kick-off event for an ongoing organized statewide learning community for hospitals and clinics to share and learn about healthy food and beverage practices. Karen Timberlake, director of the UW Population Health Institute, will kick off the Forum’s day-long agenda that will also feature a best practices panel with speakers from UW Health, Aurora Health Care, and Hudson Hospital and Clinics. Breakout sessions will highlight success stories from hospitals and clinics throughout the state, including: Agnesian HealthCare, Upland Hills Health, Sauk Prairie Healthcare, UW Health Partners Watertown Regional Medical Center, and many others.

The full agenda and online registration are available here: www.wicancer.org/healthyforum.cfm. Registration is $50. Hospitals and clinics are encouraged to bring a team to the forum. For more information, contact Emily Reynolds, eareynolds@uwcarbone.wisc.edu, 608-262-7285, or Nan Peterson, npeterson@uwhealth.org, 608-262-9993.

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in the State Senate. Sanfelippo chairs the Assembly Committee on Health. In this role, he helps set direction for health care policy in the State Assembly. Barca, Assembly Minority Leader, leads the Democrats in the State Assembly. As always, the panel will provide attendees new insights into the issues facing health care in our state.

In addition, attendees will hear from multiple keynotes, including Tucker Carlson, a nationally-known veteran journalist and political commentator who will share an insider’s view on Washington, D.C., and Gov. Scott Walker, who will give the luncheon address. WHA expects over 500 attendees to then take what they have learned over to the State Capitol to meet with legislators or their staffs. With Advocacy Day falling right during legislative action on the biennial state budget bill, hospital advocates will be able to speak up about important budget issues such as Medicaid funding. Optional pre-event webinars are also available for those going on legislative visits.

Advocacy Day is April 28 in Madison at the Monona Terrace Convention Center. You won’t want to miss this day of learning, networking and advocating for your patients, hospitals and communities. Make sure your hospital contingent is registered today at: http://events.signup4.net/15AdvocacyDay0428.

For Advocacy Day questions, contact Jenny Boese at 608-268-1816 or jboese@wha.org. For registration questions, contact Jenna Hanson at jenna.hanson@wha.org or 608-274-1820.