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Information for E-news is compiled from several sources, including websites and lists from the *Wheeler Report*, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Kaiser Family Foundation, Commonwealth Fund, *Milbank Quarterly*, *Health Affairs*, Urban Institute, *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, Wispolitics.com, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, *The New York Times*, *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, *Milwaukee Business Journal*, *Wisconsin State Journal*, Wisconsin Technology Network and others.

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## STATE NEWS

### Wisconsin Office of Health Care Reform Launched

The Wisconsin Office of Health Care Reform will lead the implementing national health care reform in Wisconsin. DHS Secretary, Karen Timberlake and OCI Commissioner, Sean Dilweg will chair the Office. Many other resources are available the provisions of the federal reform law, including the following:

- [White House Health Reform Page](#)
- [National Conference of State Legislatures](#)
- [Kaiser Family Foundation Health Reform Portal](#)
- [National Health Reform Law and Policy Project](#)

The White House has prepared a [Wisconsin-specific summary](#) of how health reform specifically affects each state

The [Wisconsin Council on Children and Families blog](#) provides a liberal perspective on how the reforms will affect the state

A conservative perspective is available at the [Wisconsin Policy Research Institute blog](#).

### **State selects four companies to handle BadgerCare Plus patients**

The *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* reports that DHS “has selected four companies to manage the care of 240,000 people covered by BadgerCare Plus in southeastern Wisconsin as part of an initiative that could save \$40 million a year ... The new contracts - potentially worth tens of millions of dollars - will hold the companies to stricter standards on such quality measures as the rate of child immunizations.”

### **Health care reform could shift many from BadgerCare Plus to other coverage**

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reports that “Some 60,000 Wisconsin residents could be shifted in the coming years from the state's BadgerCare Plus health coverage for the poor to commercial plans, under the federal health reform law. That's just one option that Wisconsin officials will have as they work through the effects of the sweeping federal law on the state's own extensive Medicaid health programs.”

### **WI Health Bills Signed into Law**

[Senate Bill 271](#), the BPA-Free Kids Act, has now been signed into law. The law will help protect children from exposure to the potentially-harmful effects of bisphenol-A (BPA). Senate Bill 271 bans the manufacture or sale of new baby bottles or cups for children aged 3 years or younger that contain BPA. The bill also requires that manufacturers and stores selling these bottles or cups clearly state that they are BPA-free, and creates a fine for manufacturers or wholesalers found guilty of violating the rules. [Assembly Bill 614](#), the Health Care Transparency Bill, has also been signed into law. It requires health care providers to disclose the cost of the most common procedures they perform. It will help consumers get price estimates prior to a procedure, help them make apples-to-apples comparisons on prices, and help them determine out-of-pocket costs prior to services occurring.

### **Audit Released on Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund**

The Legislative Audit Bureau’s recent audit of the Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund has renewed the concerns voiced by the Wisconsin Medical Society pertaining to the \$200 million transfer of funds out of the fund in the 2007-09 biennium.. The audit shows the fund with over \$100 million in fewer assets available to meet projected liabilities at the end of 2009. The Wisconsin Medical Society sued the state to restore the funds, and the suit is currently before the State Supreme Court.

### **Wisconsin to Receive \$1.9 Million in USDA School Lunch Grants**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has provided a \$1,960,526 grant to help Wisconsin schools operating a National School Lunch Program (NSLP) better administer the programs and improve the quality of school meals. Wisconsin will use its grant to implement accountability software to provide technical assistance and training for schools.

### **Report: Maximizing Enrollment for Kids in WI**

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation released [a set of reports](#) that describe and assess Medicaid and CHIP enrollment systems in eight grantee states (Alabama, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, Utah, Virginia and [Wisconsin](#)). The eight reports plus a summary synthesis provide a roadmap to increasing children’s enrollment in these programs and others

nationwide. The diagnostic assessments were conducted to provide a foundation for these states' work over the next three years to improve enrollment of eligible children.

### **WI Features in Report on State Health Reform and Lessons for Policymakers**

Wisconsin is featured in a new report by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded *State Coverage Initiatives*, which draws on the implementation experiences of five states—Massachusetts, New Mexico, Tennessee, Vermont and Wisconsin—to provide insights into the operational aspects of health reform. The report identifies the key questions that policymakers should consider when implementing health care reform, and also provides a set of related takeaways—particularly what must happen operationally pre- and post-implementation.

### **La Crosse & Wood Counties Awarded \$6 Million Recovery Grant for Obesity Prevention**

Wisconsin has been awarded a nearly \$6 million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant to support public health efforts to reduce obesity, promote healthy eating habits, and increase physical activity among children and adults in La Crosse and Wood Counties. The competitive award to Wisconsin is part of the national "Communities Putting Prevention to Work" program. <http://www.hhs.gov/recovery/programs/cppw/grantees.html>  
The Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council was also awarded \$1 million for tobacco use prevention.

### **WI Received \$500,000 Federal Grant for Multi-State Physician Licensure Project**

Wisconsin has received a \$500,000 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant to help streamline the ability of physicians to practice medicine across state lines. The grant will help develop a plan to increase the portability of medical licensure and privileges between the states of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Indiana and Iowa.

### **WI's Online Donor Registry Has Been Unveiled**

The web-based registry will make it even easier for Wisconsin residents to list themselves as a donor through a secure online database. The new online Donor Registry will allow Wisconsin citizens to legally authorize organ, tissue and eye donation with a click of a button. This simple but highly effective tool is expected to help save or enhance thousands of lives over the next decade.

### **Milwaukee Study: Improving Asthma Outcomes in Minority Children**

This study in *Pediatrics* reports on the results of an experimental program in Milwaukee that uses trained parent mentors to help other parents care for their young child's asthma. This led to a reduction in wheezing, asthma exacerbations, emergency room visits, and missed work days, while improving parents' competence in recognizing breathing problems that are controllable at home, all at a reasonable cost.

### **U.S. Government Recognizes WI for Achievements in Aging and Disability Resources**

The federal Administration on Aging (AoA) has recognized the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' pioneering work and continued innovation with Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs). Assistant Secretary for Aging, Kathy Greenlee, announced the "Outstanding Achievement Award" at a national conference last month.

## **Legislature Advances Health Information Exchange Bills**

Companion bills [[AB 779](#) and [SB 579](#)] that would authorize the creation of a private-public entity to coordinate planning and implementation of a statewide health information exchange (HIE) system both unanimously passed their respective legislative committee reviews this week. Under the terms of a \$9.4 million federal grant to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the state must select a state-designated entity (SDE) to carry out the planning and implementation functions.

## **RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS**

### **New Resources from the Evidence-Based Health Policy Project**

- Presentations from [April 12 Symposium on Health Care Reform](#)
- Materials from [March 3 Briefing on Provider Scope of Practice](#)
- Presentation from [February 25 Briefing on Accountable Care Organizations](#)

### **New and Updated Resources from the Commonwealth Fund**

- [A Guide to Achieving High Performance in Multi-Hospital Health Systems](#)
- [How Health Reform Legislation Will Affect Medicare Beneficiaries](#)
- [The Growing Financial Burden of Health Care: National and State Trends](#)
- [Widespread Adoption of Information Technology in Primary Care Physician Offices in Denmark: A Case Study](#)

### **New and Updated Resources from the Kaiser Family Foundation**

- [Health Reform Implementation Timeline](#)
- [CHIP Tips: Children's Oral Health Benefits](#)
- [Expanding Medicaid: Coverage for Low-Income Adults under Health Reform](#)
- [Medicaid Financial Eligibility: The Elderly And People With Disabilities](#)
- [Poll Shows Americans Are Evenly Divided Over Health Reform Legislation As Congress Prepares To Vote](#)
- Health Reform [Side-by-Side](#) and [Calculator](#) Now Reflect Latest Version of Health Reform Legislation
- [Analysis Finds Drug Prices on the Rise in Medicare's Part D Coverage Gap](#)
- [Assessing the Risk of Becoming Uninsured After Leaving a Job: A Look at the Data](#)
- [Policy Brief: Aging Out of Medicaid: What is the Risk of Becoming Uninsured?](#)
- [Analysis Finds Medicare Part D Plan Drug Prices for Brands Rising In the Coverage Gap](#)
- [Impact of Global TB epidemic by region and an overview of the U.S. response](#)
- [Demographics & the Economy](#)
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- [Medicaid & CHIP](#)
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- [Managed Care & Health Insurance](#)
- [HIV/AIDS](#)

## **New Resources from the [National Academy for State Health Policy](#)**

- [Maximizing Enrollment for Kids: Results from a Diagnostic Assessment of Enrollment and Retention in Eight States](#)
- [Opportunities and Recommendations for State-Federal Coordination to Improve Health System Performance: A Focus on Patient Safety](#)

**RWJF:** [Interactive Tobacco Map Shows State Smoking Laws](#)

## **EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Monday Population Health Seminar Series**

Every Monday, 12:00 - 1:00 PM, Room 1309 HSLC

### **Seminar: Impact of Childhood Activity Limitations on Parental Health, Mental Health, etc**

April 15<sup>th</sup>, 12:14-1:30pm, 8417 Social Science

### **Lecture: Keeping Women Safer in Communities and the Health Care System**

April 15<sup>th</sup>, 4:30-6:30pm, Pyle Center – AT&T Lounge

### **Wisconsin Rural Health Summit**

May 10, Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells

### **Conference: Wisconsin Women's Health Policy Summit**

May 12<sup>th</sup>, 8:00am-5:00pm, Alliant Energy Center Exhibition Hall, Registration Required

## **READING ROOM**

### **Health Affairs Issue Explores Solutions for Combating Childhood Obesity Epidemic**

How should America tackle an obesity crisis that is threatening the health and well-being of nearly one-third of its children? That is the subject of the March 2010 edition of *Health Affairs*, which both describes the root causes of this pathology and offers prescriptions for improving the health of America's children. The March issue is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

### **Fetal Tobacco Exposure Promotes Asthma** [subscription needed]

Maternal smoking during pregnancy may exert a more powerful influence on asthma development in children than postnatal secondhand smoke or breastfeeding by smoking moms.

### **How Will Comparative Effectiveness Research Affect the Quality of Health Care?**

This issue brief examines the concept of comparative effectiveness research, identifies the current limited use of such information to guide benefits decisions, and the challenges ahead for the expansion of CER.

### **Coordinating and Improving Care for Dual Eligibles in Nursing Facilities**

This policy brief explores possible avenues to reduce the fragmentation of care for dually eligible Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, including shifting the responsibility for long-term nursing facility care from Medicaid to Medicare. The author examines the impact such changes could have on prescription drug use, hospitalizations, home- and community-based services, and state and federal financial and administrative responsibilities while acknowledging: "This would admittedly be a large leap in health care policymaking."

### **Study: Hospital Cost of Care, Quality of Care, and Readmissions**

A study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that Medicare beneficiaries admitted to U.S. hospitals with heart failure or pneumonia showed no definitive connection between the cost and quality of care, or between cost and death rates. Some experts are concerned about the tradeoffs between hospitals' efforts to lower costs and at the same time improve quality. This study shows little evidence to support the "penny-wise and pound-foolish" hypothesis: that low-cost hospitals discharge patients earlier but have higher readmission rates and greater inpatient costs downstream.

### **National Quality Forum: Measuring Efficiency Across Episodes of Care**

This new report presents the National Quality Forum-endorsed measurement framework for assessing efficiency, and ultimately value, over the course of an episode of care.

### **Most Seniors Using Specialty-Tier Drugs Hit Hard by 'Doughnut Hole'**

The Government Accountability Office released a report saying that 55 percent of Medicare enrollees taking at least one of a category of high-cost pharmaceuticals known as "specialty tier" drugs reached what Medicare considers to be "catastrophic" levels of out-of-pocket drug spending.

### **Hospice Study Finds Racial Disparities**

Among patients with advanced heart failure, blacks and Hispanics are less likely to receive hospice care than whites, researchers found.

### **Special Needs Kids Often Underinsured**

Nearly a third of children with special healthcare needs are underinsured, and where a child lives strongly influences whether he or she will have adequate healthcare coverage, a new study found.

### **Reports of Death of Medicare Advantage May Be Exaggerated**

America's Health Insurance Plans said that cuts under the House Democratic health care overhaul package would "pull the plug" on the Medicare Advantage program. As it turns out, the Congressional Budget Office doesn't agree.

### **Private-Payer Profits Can Induce Negative Medicare Margins**

This report asserts that hospitals with strong market power and higher private-payer and other revenues appear to have less pressure to constrain their costs. Thus, these hospitals have higher costs per unit of service, which can lead to losses on Medicare patients. Hospitals under more



financial pressure--with less market share and less ability to charge higher private rates--often constrain costs and can generate profits on Medicare patients.

### **America's Middle Class Shouldering the Brunt of Health Insurance Crisis**

This report provides a state-by-state analysis of changes in the numbers of individuals who were insured by any means as well as changes in numbers of uninsured for all income levels between 2000 and 2008. The study draws upon data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey and concludes that "the number of middle-income earners who obtained health insurance from their employers dropped by 3 million people from 2000 to 2008. Just 66 percent of people in families earning roughly \$45,000 to \$85,000 are now insured through their employer--a drop of seven percentage points from 2000 to 2008".

### **Nonmelanoma Skin Cancer Now Epidemic**

Despite efforts to inform the public about the risk of sun exposure, the rate of nonmelanoma skin cancer in the U.S. is reaching epidemic proportions, with more than two million people affected in 2006, researchers said.

### **Behaviors not Class Drive Health Status**

The strong association between socioeconomic status and the risk of early death largely disappeared when differences in health behaviors were taken into account, researchers found.