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

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### *In This Issue*

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#### **STATE NEWS**

- [State Medicaid Programs Shortfall Projections Reduced](#)
- [BadgerCare Core Plan Evaluation Findings Released](#)
- [Wisconsin Returns Nearly \\$50 Million Federal Funding for Health Exchanges](#)
- [Area Insurer Repositioning and Respond to Halting of Health Exchanges](#)
- [Governor: May Not Eliminate BadgerCare Coverage for 53,000 Adults](#)
- [WI Receives \\$24 M for Enrolling Eligible Children in Health Coverage](#)
- [Plans to Lift Cap on Long-Term Care](#)
- [DHS Projects Savings for Long Term Care Programs; LFB Questions Figures](#)
- [Three Wisconsin Metro Areas Named Top for Hospital Care; Six Cities Also Recognized](#)
- [Milwaukee Ad Campaign Aims to Reduce Infant Mortality Rates](#)
- [Wisconsin Receive Worst Ranking in Country for Binge Drinking](#)
- [Diagnose Women Project Receives \\$3,000 Grant](#)
- [Wisconsin Well Woman Program will Continue in 4 Counties](#)
- [Aurora Sinai Remains Open; Strategizing for Survival](#)
- [Statewide Initiative Aims to Reduce Costs, Improve Care](#)
- [New Medical College in Central WI a Possibility](#)
- [Veterans Open Recovery Home for Alcoholics in Wausau](#)
- [Silica Dust from Sand Mining will not be Regulated](#)
- [Adams County Cancer Rates 25.3% Higher than WI Average](#)
- [DHS: Homes Should be Tested for Radon](#)

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

- Legislative Council Updates:
  - [Special Committee on Infant Mortality](#)
  - [Special Committee on Health Care Access](#)
- Proposed Bills
  - [LRB 3917 to strengthen Third Party Liability \(TPL\) database](#)
  - [SB 273: Proposed Plan for Implementing Medicaid Reform](#)
  - [AB 409 & SB305: Would Require 60 Days Prior Notification to Changes in Eligibility or Benefits to MA Recipients](#)
  - [SB 383 & AB 487: Would Create Licensure Requirements and Practice Standards for Anesthesiologist Assistants](#)
  - [AB 512: Would Authorize Medically Related Actions by Physician Assistants](#)
  - [SB 389 & AB 469: Would Exempt Electronic Smoking Devices from the Types of Smoking Devices that may not be Used in Certain Locations](#)
  - [SB 380 & AB 477: Would remove the Cap on Enrollment in FamilyCare and other Long-Term Care Programs](#)
  - [SB 371 & AB 475: Would Allow for Medical Use of Marijuana](#)
  - [SB 360: Would Eliminate the Minimum Sale Price of Prescription Drugs](#)
  - [SB 306 & AB 371: Would Require Doctors to Confirm Abortion Request is Voluntary](#)
  - [SB 420: Would Change Requirements for Membership on the Medical Examining Board](#)
  - [AB 408 & SB297: Would Eliminate the Ability to Impose Assessment on Ambulatory Surgical Centers](#)
  - [AB440 & SB 317: Schedule II Substance Could be Dispensed Electronic Prescription](#)
  - [SB 101 & AB 151: Bill would eliminate costly difference between oral, IV chemotherapy](#)
  - [AB 530: Would Require State Agencies to Submit Cost Reports for Implementing PPACA](#)

## RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

- New and Updated Resources from the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#)
- New and Updated Resources from the [Commonwealth Fund](#)
  - [Why Not the Best?](#)
- New and Updated Resources from [GlobalHealth.Gov](#)
- New and Updated Resources from [Prepared Patient](#)
- New and Updated Resources from [AHRQ](#)
  - [Emergency Severity Index \(ESI\): A Triage Tool for ED Care](#)
  - [Identifying Health Care Quality Measures for Medicaid-Eligible Adults](#)
  - [Medical Office Survey on Patient Safety Culture](#)

- [AHRQ Quality Indicators™ Toolkit for Hospitals](#)
- New and Updated Resources from [WhiteHouse.Gov](#)
- Wisconsin Toolbox:
  - [Winter Weather Health & Safety Tips](#)
  - [HealthFirstWisconsin](#)
  - [HRSA in Wisconsin](#)
  - [HIPAA COW Risk Analysis & Risk Management Toolkit](#)
  - [Online Training for Emergency Responders](#)
  - [Health IT tutorials offer free Continuing Medical Education](#)

## **EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- [Assessing Your Vendors for ICD-10 Readiness](#)
- [ACO Innovators: Health System Transformation in Wisconsin](#)
- [Advocate & Lobby for Kids Day](#)
- [Introduction to Finding Grants](#)
- [45<sup>th</sup> Annual Governor's Conference on Emergency Management & Homeland Security](#)
- [WHA Physician Leadership Development Conference](#)
- [Wisconsin AgriSafe Training](#)
- [Wipfli Annual Rural Health Clinic Conference](#)
- [2012 Wisconsin Health Education Network \(WHEN\) Annual Meeting](#)

## **READING ROOM**

- [WellPoint Launches Primary Care Initiative](#)
- [Government Health Expenditures May Hit \\$1.8 trillion in Coming Decade](#)
- [Medicare Advantage's Enrollments are up while Premiums are Down](#)
- [GAO Urges CMS to Change Calculation of Private Plan Payments](#)
- [National Health Spending Grew Slowly In 2010](#)
- [Delayed/Forgone Care for Chronic Conditions in High-Deductible Health Plans](#)
- [State Progress Toward Health Reform Implementation](#)
- [Study Finds Racial and Ethnic Disparities in US Cancer Screening Rates](#)

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## **STATE NEWS**

### **State Medicaid Programs Shortfall Projections Reduced**

DHS has submitted to the legislature its [overall assessment of the Medicaid budget and plans for balancing the deficit](#). WI DHS has reduced its estimate of the Medicaid budget deficit by almost 60% to, from the previously projected \$554 million biennium shortfall down to \$231.8 million all funds (\$93 million GPR). The [new Legislative Fiscal Bureau report](#) notes that Wisconsin's Medicaid programs have a \$141 million shortfall in state money over the next year and a half. This report questions whether or not the savings will materialize.

### **BadgerCare Core Plan Evaluation Findings Released**

The UW Population Health Institute has completed studies of the impact of BadgerCare Core Plan coverage on former GAMP enrollees and other childless adults. The study documents significant changes in health services utilization. A separate study analyses the utility of the required Health Needs Assessment, finding that it provides significant predictive value.

- [Report #1: Evaluation of Wisconsin's BadgerCare Plus Core Plan for Adults without Dependent Children: How Does Coverage of Childless Adults Affect Their Utilization?](#)
- [Report #2: Evaluation of Wisconsin's BadgerCare Plus Core Plan for Adults without Dependent Children: The Utility of the Health Needs Assessment \(HNA\)](#)

### **Wisconsin Returns Nearly \$50 Million Federal Funding for Health Exchanges**

Governor Walker has halted all health reform implementation, closed his Office of Free Market Health Care and returned nearly \$50 million in federal funding related to the federal Affordable Care Act. The largest portion of funds being returned are around [\\$38 million dollars](#) in funding from the federal government that had previously been awarded through an Early Innovator Grant for early adoption and implementation of the health care exchanges. Another smaller portion of funding, around [\\$11 million dollars](#), were meant to make cost-saving improvements to existing Medicaid programs. This reverses the [Governor's previous position](#) pertaining to the development of the health insurance exchange.

### **Area Insurer Repositioning to Address Industry Reform, Regulation**

A group of Wisconsin health insurance companies has formed the [Alliance of Health Insurers](#), a nonprofit trade association, to focus on health reform and industry regulations. Several of the founding members broke from membership in the [Wisconsin Association of Health Plans](#), and the members cover nearly 70% of Wisconsin's large group, small group and individual commercial market plans along with 60% Medicaid enrollees. Alongside this development, some area health insurance companies [have expressed concerns over the governor's decision](#) to halt implementation of the health insurance exchanges. They are concerned that lack of state implementation may lead to federal involvement that will enforce stricter regulations and limit their flexibility in providing health insurance coverage.

### **Governor: May Not Eliminate BadgerCare Coverage for 53,000 Adults**

The biennial budget act says that if the Wisconsin has not received a waiver by Dec. 31, 2011 of the federal ACA maintenance of effort requirements, DHS will end BadgerCare eligibility of adults over 133% of the federal poverty level (FPL) – based on ability to certify a budget deficit. Governor Walker now says that, given [CMS's interim response](#), the state doesn't necessarily have to cut off the 53,000 adults over 133% of FPL.

### **WI Receives \$24 M for Enrolling Eligible Children in Health Coverage**

Wisconsin has received over \$24million from the [federal government](#) for its success in signing up eligible children in BadgerCare, Wisconsin's Medicaid program for children. Wisconsin is one of [23 states](#) receiving bonuses from HHS for their success in reducing barriers to enrollment.

### [Plans to Lift Cap on Long-Term Care](#)

A plan to lift the cap on Long-Term Care has been [announced by the current state administration](#) at the direction of the federal government's Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS). CMS had written a [letter](#) to the Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services (DHS) informing the state that they must remove the cap on Long-Term Care services. The plan to lift the Family Care enrollment cap calls for legislative action and DHS implementation by this spring. DHS plans to find \$80 million to pay for lifting the cap on enrollment and expanding to new counties.

### [DHS Projects Savings for Long Term Care Programs; LFB Questions Figures](#)

DHS has launched a [website](#) outlining [seeking comment on](#) initiatives meant to be designed to keep the state's long term care programs sustainable, as the state lifts the Family Care cap and faces a decrease in federal Medicaid matching funds. However, the [Legislative Fiscal Bureau](#) [has issued a report](#) questioning the relevance of information used by the Department of Health Services to calculate roughly half of its estimated savings for Family Care. DHS assumes that 23 percent of nursing home admissions in Wisconsin are due to medication non-compliance and that medication dispensers can reduce non-compliance by 98 percent.

### [Three Wisconsin Metro Areas Named Top for Hospital Care; Six Cities Also Recognized](#)

HealthGrades named the top 50 metro markets for hospital care, and included La Crosse-Eau Claire at 26th, Milwaukee at 36th, and Green Bay-Appleton at 46th. Several Wisconsin hospitals were also named "Distinguished Hospitals for Clinical Excellence." Another report, compiled by the website Daily Beast, names six Wisconsin cities among the 25 best nationally for health care. This list names [Watertown](#), [Fond du Lac](#), [La Crosse](#), [Monroe](#), [Sheboygan](#), and [Marshfield](#), based on U.S. Census data regarding overall health-care coverage and coverage for the very young, very old, and the disabled.

### [Milwaukee Ad Campaign Aims to Reduce Infant Mortality Rates](#)

Milwaukee recently released its fifth ad in its [Strong Baby](#) ad campaign. The campaign, which focuses on prenatal care, immunizations, smoking cessation, breast feeding, and eating healthful foods, aims to reduce overall infant mortality rate by at least 10% by 2017. The City of Milwaukee Health Department partnered with the Zilber School of Public Health to develop the new ad campaign that focuses on preventing premature births in Milwaukee where more than 340 babies died from 2008 to 2010.

### [Wisconsin Receive Worst Ranking in Country for Binge Drinking](#)

According to a recently released [CDC report](#) on binge drinking, Wisconsin received the lowest ranking among all 50 states for binge drinking behaviors. [Binge drinking](#), as defined by the CDC, means men drinking 5 or more alcoholic drinks within a short period of time or women drinking 4 or more drinks within a short period of time. Wisconsin ranks worst for both estimated percentage of adults who binge drink (25.6%) as well as average largest number of alcoholic beverages consumed in a short period of time (9). The CDC report provides information on [how to combat binge drinking behaviors](#).

### **[Diagnose Women Project Receives \\$3,000 Grant](#)**

HealthNet of Rock County Inc. provides primary health care to the uninsured and low-income residents of Rock County, Wisconsin in downtown Janesville and has recently received a \$3,000 grant from The Women's Fund, a component of the [Community Foundation of Southern Wisconsin, Inc.](#), to support the Diagnose Women Project. The Diagnose Women project will provide ultrasounds to low-income and uninsured women in Rock County, leading to better health outcomes.

### **[Wisconsin Well Woman Program will Continue in 4 Counties](#)**

After some [recent uncertainty about its future](#), the Wisconsin Well Women Program will be continuing in Winnebago, Fond du Lac, Outagamie and Sheboygan counties under the management of two newly created positions after approval by the Winnebago County Board. The program is funded by both state and federal dollars, and the services in these areas were previously provided by Planned Parenthood. The Wisconsin Well Women Program provides health services to uninsured women.

### **[Aurora Sinai Remains Open; Strategizing for Survival](#)**

[Aurora Sinai Medical Center](#), one of only two safety-net hospitals in Milwaukee for low income neighborhoods, will remain open but needs to undergo change. The hospital has lost \$107 million over the last decade and is projected to lose another \$30 million this year if nothing changes. [Aurora Health Care officials, as of early February, say they will make a decision within 60 days](#). About 40% of Sinai patients are covered by Medicaid, while 29% are covered by Medicare, 21% have commercial insurance and 10% are self-pay patients or uninsured. The [Milwaukee Business Journal reports](#) that Sinai Medical Center links its financial troubles to the 2006 closure of St. Michael's Hospital by competitor Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare

### **[Statewide Initiative Aims to Reduce Costs, Improve Care](#)**

The [Wisconsin Hospital Association](#) has launched a statewide initiative, Partners for Patients Initiative, to reduce both hospital-acquired conditions and readmissions. The goal of the program is, by the end of 2013, to decrease preventable hospital-acquired conditions by 40% and to reduce hospital readmissions by 20%. The program is funded by PPACA authorized funding through CMS. Nearly 100 Wisconsin hospitals have agreed to participate,

### **[New Medical College in Central WI a Possibility](#)**

The board of the [Medical College of Wisconsin](#) has approved a feasibility study to explore the development of a statewide community-based medical education program to address [Wisconsin's pending physician shortage](#). The board approved feasibility analyses of placing community-based medical school components in one or more regions throughout Wisconsin. The [University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point](#) believes it could be a great resource for a medical school and hopes that the schools would work together to make use of existing programs and courses at UWSP. The [Wisconsin College of Osteopathic Medicine](#) is [also considering](#) locating another campus in one of the areas

### [Veterans Open Recovery Home for Alcoholics in Wausau](#)

Two Wisconsin military veterans have opened a recovery home for alcoholics in Wausau, WI. The home is located near the University of Wisconsin Marathon County, and is part of Oxford House, a national nonprofit that provides guidelines and support for people starting recovery homes. Many believe that homes like this make it easier for people to get sober by providing addicts with an environment where they have support from peers.

### [Silica Dust from Sand Mining will not be Regulated](#)

A group of local citizens concerned with the potential public health threat of silica dust has requested that the DNR regulate the crystalline silica that is increasing in many areas of western Wisconsin due to increased sand mining. The DNR doesn't plan to regulate silica dust as they assert that the silica is sufficiently controlled with current regulations. In a [report from August 2011](#), the DNR and Department of Health Services said that it found little conclusive evidence of possible negative health effects from silica.

### [Adams County Cancer Rates 25.3% Higher than WI Average](#)

The [UW Carbone Cancer Center](#) reports that that cancer death rate, for all types of cancer, in Adams County is more than 25.3 percent higher than the state average (182 per 100,000). The study showed that disparities in certain cancer risks, like smoking and obesity, low use of preventive health services, and a lower household income, were associated with higher-than-average cancer rates.

### [DHS: Homes Should be Tested for Radon](#)

State health officials are encouraging Wisconsin residents to test their homes for radon levels during these cold winter months when we spend more time indoors. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the nation among non-smokers, is an odorless odorless radioactive gas that is naturally present in the ground and can enter buildings through their foundations of both new and old homes. Between 5 and 10 percent of Wisconsin homes have elevated airborne concentrations.

## [LEGISLATIVE UPDATE](#)

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The Special Committee on Infant Mortality [results letter](#) summarizes the bill drafts that had been recommended by the committee that the Joint Legislative Council then approved for introduction, and lists those that were not approved.
  - [Special Committee on Health Care Access](#)  
The Special Committee on Health Care Access [results letter](#) summarizes the bill drafts that had been recommended by the committee that the Joint Legislative Council then approved for introduction, and lists those that were not approved.

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  - [Medical Office Survey on Patient Safety Culture](#)
  - [AHRQ Quality Indicators™ Toolkit for Hospitals](#)
- New and Updated Resources from [WhiteHouse.Gov](#)
- Wisconsin Toolbox:
  - [HealthFirstWisconsin](#)

Health First Wisconsin purpose is to exist at the crossroads between scientific advice and the real world where individuals and families live and work.
  - [HRSA in Wisconsin](#)

The [Health Resources and Services Administration](#), the primary Federal agency for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated or medically vulnerable, provides reports for individual states. This website provides information on HRSA related information in Wisconsin.
  - [HIPAA COW Risk Analysis & Risk Management Toolkit](#)

This Toolkit is a work in progress: more documents will be added to further assist organizations in their efforts to complete a Risk Analysis, Risk Assessment, and their Risk Management strategy.
  - [Online Training for Emergency Responders](#)

The Wisconsin Utilities Association (WUA) is partnering with Callan and Associates to offer the “Responding to Utility Emergencies” course. The online training program covers the dangers that first responders must deal with when utilities such as electricity and natural gas are involved at an emergency.
  - [Health IT tutorials offer free Continuing Medical Education](#)

The American Medical Association (AMA) and TransforMED, have released three online [educational tutorials](#) to help physician practices better implement health information technology (health IT). The continuing medical education (CME) activity explores the value of workflow assessment and redesign to help physicians and their staffs effectively use health IT.

## **EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

[Assessing Your Vendors for ICD-10 Readiness](#), February 15<sup>th</sup>, Webinar

[ACO Innovators: Health System Transformation in Wisconsin](#), February 22, Madison

[Advocate & Lobby for Kids Day](#), March 7<sup>th</sup>, Madison

[Introduction to Finding Grants](#), March 9<sup>th</sup>, Stevens Point

[45<sup>th</sup> Annual Governor's Conference on Emergency Management & Homeland Security](#),  
March 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>, Appleton

[WHA Physician Leadership Development Conference](#), March 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>, Kohler

[Wisconsin AgriSafe Training](#), March 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>, Marshfield

[Wipfli Annual Rural Health Clinic Conference](#), April 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, Milwaukee

[2012 Wisconsin Health Education Network \(WHEN\) Annual Meeting](#), April 19<sup>th</sup>, Middleton

## **READING ROOM**

### **WellPoint Launches Primary Care Initiative**

Health insurer WellPoint Inc. plans to increase payments to primary care physician practices and start paying for services like preparing care plans for patients with complex medical problems. It also will offer doctors an opportunity to share in some savings when better patient care leads to a reduction in costs. WellPoint Inc. operates Blue Cross Blue Shield plans in 14 states, including Wisconsin, and is one of the nation's largest health insurers.

### **Government Health Expenditures May Hit \$1.8 trillion in Coming Decade**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently released a [report](#) that, even with its most conservative projections, sees the US's health care spending rising by 8% a year between 2012 and 2022. The increases in projected health care spending are accounted for by increased Medicare costs (about half of projected spending), Medicaid (about 1/3 of spending) and new federal subsidies that will occur through the new health care law.

### **Medicare Advantage's Enrollments are up while Premiums are Down**

Confirming last fall's projections, Medicare Advantage plan enrollment rates have risen while average premiums have fallen. HHS recently announced that Medicare Advantage premiums have fallen an average of 7% while enrollment has risen 10% since a year ago at this time. The cost of an average premium for Medicare Advantage plans has fallen from \$33.97 (2011) to \$31.53 (2012) while enrollment has risen from 11.7 million (2011) to 12.8 million (2012).

### [GAO Urges CMS to Change Calculation of Private Plan Payments](#)

The GAO's [recent study](#) reports that Medicare has overpaid insurers by \$1.2 billion to \$3.1 billion in 2010, due to the use of a flawed methodology to pay private Medicare Advantage Plans. This discovery led the GAO to encourage Medicare officials to change their methodology for payment of private Medicare Advantage (MA) plans.

### [Health Reform Law Saves \\$2.1 billion for 3.6 million American with Medicare](#)

According to a [recent report](#) from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the new health care law saved 3.6 million Medicare recipients who had hit the donut hole in 2011 an average of \$604 on the cost of their prescriptions, totally \$2.1 billion dollars in savings. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) gives Medicare recipients a 50% discount on brand-name prescriptions and a 14% discount on generics. People on Medicare will see an average savings of almost 4,200 by 2021. The donut hole will be completely closed by 2020.

### [National Health Spending Grew Slowly In 2010](#)

The recession, portions of premiums allocated to administrative costs decreasing, and lower spending on prescription drugs are all considered factors in the slowing of national health care spending for the second year in a row, though some analysts believe that the slowdown is at least in part due to structural changes and not merely cyclical changes. The slowdown in health care spending, which grew by 3.9% in 2010, is now closer to being in line with the gross domestic product (GDP) which grew by 4.2% during the same time period. The [Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#) reports on their findings in the journal, [Health Affairs](#).

### [Delayed/Forgone Care for Chronic Conditions in High-Deductible Health Plans](#)

Researchers compared families with High Deductible Health Plans (HDHP) to similar families with traditional (non-HDHP) health care plans. The reporting of delayed/forgone health care treatment due to cost is higher for families with HDHP than those in traditional health care plans. Lower income families were also at risk for delayed/forgone treatment.

### [State Progress Toward Health Reform Implementation](#)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the Urban Institute report that the 15 states who have done the least to implement their state health insurance exchanges are the states with the highest rates of uninsured residents. States vary widely in their progress on development of exchanges, though the Affordable Care Act requires that states demonstrate significant progress by January 1, 2013 in preparation for implementation on January 1, 2014.

### [Study Finds Racial and Ethnic Disparities in US Cancer Screening Rates](#)

Cancer screening rates are well below the [Healthy People 2020](#) target rates for breast cancer, cervical cancer, and colorectal cancer. Significantly lower cancer screening rates for these diseases were noted among Asians and Hispanics, who were less likely to be screened for cervical and colorectal cancer when compared to non-Hispanics .