

WASHINGTON STATE NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2006

LATE FALL UPDATE

SSWLHC EDUCATION CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- December 7, 2006 SSWLHC Legislative Advocacy Forum
Lorna Stone, MSW, Vice President of Washington Health Foundation & Don Sloma, WHF Director of Policy,
Cassie Sauer, MSW, Director of Policy Advocacy, WSHA
- March 16, 2007 SSWLHC Social Work Month
"Caring for Self" with Marty Richards, MSW
- April 23–28, 2007 SSWLHC 42nd National Conference and Annual Meeting, Philadelphia Pa

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WA STATE DOP RECONSIDERS: SOCIAL WORK CLASS REMAINS SEPARATE; TITLE PROTECTION NOW BEING SOUGHT

On October 30, NASW/WA organizer Roseann Martinez received a copy of a bulletin dated October 23, 2006, in which the WA Department of Personnel announced modifications to their plan to consolidate state job classifications. A careful review of their material and followup with the classification project manager revealed that the social worker classification is no longer included in the abolished job categories under Group 4, which were scheduled to be collapsed into new, more general categories effective July 2007.

The state website referencing this information can be found at the following URL: <http://www.dop.wa.gov/HRProfessionals/Classification/>.

On July 1, 2005, new civil service rules and collective bargaining agreements went into effect for all of state government that mandated consolidated job classes to be phased in over the next several years, and threatened to eliminate social work classifications. Although state social work jobs can now be filled by

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SSWLHC SEEKS PRESIDENT-ELECT

The SSWLHC WA Chapter Is seeking a candidate who will lead the Chapter in 2008. As President-Elect in 2007, the individual will lead the Society's educational efforts and chair the executive committee in 2008. If you would like to make a nomination or be considered for the position, contact Linda Batway, at 360-792-6585 or by email at lindabatway@harrisonmedical.org.

Alice Chang, UWMC Transplant social worker, has agreed to run for the office of Secretary. She has served a year as Member at Large on the Executive Committee.

Hildur Gleason, recently retired social worker, formerly with Good Samaritan Hospital in Puyallup will participate as Board Member at Large.

Jacqueline Durgin, per diem social worker at Highline Medical Center and Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, will run for re-election as Communications Coordinator with responsibility for the Newsletter and, soon to be launched, website..

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SOCIAL WORK CLASSIFICATIONS AND DOP CONT. FROM PAGE 1

those with and without social work degrees, the National NASW policy manual, *Social Work Speaks*, emphasizes that any attempt to eliminate social work positions should be opposed.

A two year advocacy effort was undertaken by the Washington Chapters of NASW and SSWLHC to prevent the downgrading of degreed social workers into the more general proposed classifications of social service case manager or mental health practitioner. After a position paper was written by the NASW/WA Legislative Action Committee and a model job classification developed by Brigitte Folz of the NASW/WA Declassification Task Force, Martinez organized a letter-writing blitz and multiple meetings with DOP and DSHS officials, legislators, unions, and Sec. Clarke of Department of Corrections, to clarify how social work is distinguished from any other profession and to insist on the retention of that title for degreed social workers.

NASW/WA is celebrating this partial victory with plans for a legislative campaign for title protection, in order to prevent non-degreed social workers from misleading the public by being designated 'social workers' without the specific education, Code of Ethics, and licensure requirements that defines our profession. SSWLHC members are urged to support efforts for title protection, using materials that will be developed by NASW before the 2007 Legislative session.

Excerpts from the October 23, 2006 DOP memo: Group 4 Class Consolidation Update

"This is to update you on the status of the final group (Group 4) of class consolidations.

DOP staff has re-evaluated a number of the very broad occupational categories that were originally included in this group. As a result of this review, not all classifications initially designated will be consolidated. Instead,

we have focused on developing a single classification plan for higher education and general government positions. In order to accomplish this, staff has developed a new consolidation plan that merges common classes, eliminates duplicate class series, and combines similar classes within and between systems.

Classes that are not proposed for consolidation will generally remain unchanged, except for general revisions to ensure consistency with related classes (e.g. some, but not all, positions in a series may be proposed for merger; title changes may be needed for other classes in the series). All class codes will be revised as necessary to reflect the new classification plan.

Our goal continues to be the reduction of classes and streamlining of the class plan; however, we anticipate any additional revisions/consolidations in the future will be based on a classification study of the work performed.

The consolidation is planned for implementation July 1, 2007, depending on legislative funding. As we did in the previous class consolidations, staff will draft initial specifications and provide opportunity for agency and employee representatives to comment on the proposals. We anticipate this will occur in January/February. A meeting schedule will be posted well in advance."

The contact regarding the DOP classification project is Lisa Skriletz, Manager, (360) 664-6332.

Response by Task Force Members to the DOP announcement

Brian Giddens, President of NASW/WA, noted on 11/2 that social workers still appear in "current job classifications" and saw that as the positive news and "no small feat!". "It then gives us more reason to work on title protection legislation," he emphasized, "since even though the classification was saved, it still does not re-

SOCIAL WORK CLASSIFICATIONS AND DOP CONT. FROM PAGE 2

quire a social work degree to be in that classification."

Meetings Scheduled: Greg Miller, of Department of Corrections, 11/2: "I looked at the site specified in detail. There are several Excel spreadsheets that have meeting dates for hearings regarding these issues. The first one I see occurs 12/14/2006 in the Hearing Room at 2828 Capital Blvd. All of these appear to be in the same place. The ones after that occur on: 1/11/2007, 2/08/2007, 3/08/2007, 4/12/2007, 5/10/2007, and 6/14/2007." He asked that we insure someone attends those meetings to represent our interests.

Roseann Martinez, 11/6: "Last week I sent you a link to a DOP memo about group 4 class consolidation. This morning I spoke with Lisa Skriletz to confirm what we thought. Which is...indeed the social work categories are not being merged and social work classifications will remain as is. This also means that there is no specification being made about requiring workers to have a degree in social work. Success, Yes!! Now we will continue our work in title protection. Nick Federici (NASW contract lobbyist) and I will be meeting tomorrow to discuss draft legislation. I am working on a NASW position paper on title protection."

Next Step: The Move for Title Protection

Although the state is currently looking at tightening regulations for registered counselors, NASW President Brian Giddens believes that we must move forward now on title protection for social workers in order to capitalize on the visibility we have gained in the declassification campaign. He stated on November 3rd that, even though social workers are mentioned in the registered counselor debate, the registered counselor issue is primarily an effort to clarify protections around mental health counseling. A

title protection bill is distinct.

Licensure and Supervisory Requirements: "Given that we already have licensure and supervisory requirements in this state, our bill should be much more streamlined, focusing on protecting the title from being used by anyone who does not have a bachelors or masters degree from an accredited school of social work," Giddens said.

Title protection legislation would expand the protected category beyond that of a licensed social worker, and would state something like "Any individual calling themselves a Social Worker must have a Bachelors of Social Work, Masters of Social Work or PhD in Social Work from an accredited School of Social Work or be licensed under RCW 18.225 as a Licensed Advanced Clinical Social Worker or Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker."

Just as citizens expect attorneys to have appropriate legal training, doctors to have a medical background, and nurses to have a nursing degree, people who represent themselves as Social Workers are expected to have a specific educational background in social work. The public should not be led to believe they are receiving services from qualified Social Workers when they are receiving assistance from person who does not have any training in Social Work. The media may also refer to anyone in a role of helping the public as a "social worker" without verifying their job qualifications.

The campaign for title protection will further raise awareness of social work educational backgrounds and Code of Ethics that uniquely qualify us for involvement with disadvantaged, vulnerable, and oppressed individuals, groups, and communities adversely affected by societal conditions and with systems that may create or attempt to alleviate disparities and inequities.

More information will be presented at the December 7 SSWLHC Legislative Advocacy Forum, and a draft Title Protection Bill will be readied prior to the 2007 Legislative Session..

IN FOCUS: LEADERSHIP PROFILE

SELENA BOLOTIN

Selena Bolotin is the featured social work leader for November 2006, and is the Mental Health, Case Management and Rehab Services Director at Stevens Healthcare in Edmonds. In this capacity, she has responsibility for managing the Stevens Hospital psychiatric service line which includes a 25 bed inpatient unit, Partial Hospitalization program, outpatient clinic, and psychiatrist professional services. The Case Management Department includes social workers and nurse case managers and Rehab Services provides a full spectrum of inpatient and outpatient PT, OT and Speech Therapy.

Stevens Healthcare, Edmonds: Selena began working at Stevens in 1988 upon her family's move from Hamilton Montana to Edmonds, WA. She started as the clinical psychiatric social worker on the inpatient unit and in the Emergency Room. In this environment, she not only performed the clinical work, but began participating in ongoing program planning. In 1993, Selena became interim Social Services Director while the director was on a three-month leave.

In 1995, on promotion to Mental Health Unit Clinical Manager at Stevens, Selena became responsible for the management of the 25 bed inpatient unit, which included budget, staff supervision, scheduling, policies and procedures and meeting all regulatory requirements. She also assumed responsibility for the clinical supervision of other Mental Health programs at Stevens, including Partial Hospitalization, Centralized Intake and Emergency Department Social Services.

In 1998 Selena was again promoted, this time to Director of Mental Health and Social Services. Then in 2000, the Rehab Services Department was added to her responsibilities. In early 2006, a hospital initiative combined Social Services with Utilization Review to form the Case Management Department.

Education and Early Social Work Positions: Prior to settling in Edmonds, Selena worked in several different locations. She graduated with honors from the Social Work masters program at California State University in Sacramento in 1977, where she had also received her B.A. with honors, in Psychology and Social Work. She had also begun her social work career there in 1974, where, as an undergraduate, she provided pregnancy counseling and contraception education at Planned Parenthood in Sacramento. As a graduate student, she provided counseling services at the Student Health Center. These services included crisis intervention and long term counseling, contraception and pregnancy counseling to the University student population.

Selena's first job out of graduate school was as a Medical Social Worker at Providence Hospital in Anchorage Alaska. A year later she took a job as a Residential Group Counselor, in Fairfax County VA Women's Shelter. In 1981 Selena moved to Hamilton Montana where she went to work for the Western Montana Regional Community Mental Health Center in Hamilton as a clinician. In 1987, Selena became the Office Director for this Regional organization where she supervised clinicians and secretarial staff, was responsible for budget, service planning, local contracting and community networking.

"In my early career years I just enjoyed moving to different areas of the country. When I left the community mental health center in rural Montana after 7 years, I thought I would never work anywhere for that long again, but now it's been 18 years working at Stevens Hospital! "

Community Agency Volunteer Work: In addition to a heavy work load and family responsibility, Selena has worked as a volunteer in a variety of agencies. Activities include work at the Alaska Women's Resource Center, the California Youth Authority, Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Parents Anonymous, an Adolescent Psychiatric facility, and a Nursing facility Recreation Department, which represent her widespread interests in the spectrum of human health.

SSWLHC-WA Chapter Activity: Selena is a long time member of the SSWLHC and is active in "behind the scenes" activity in support of this Chapter. Selena frequently hosts educational projects of the Society as well as manages the Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) program for the organization.

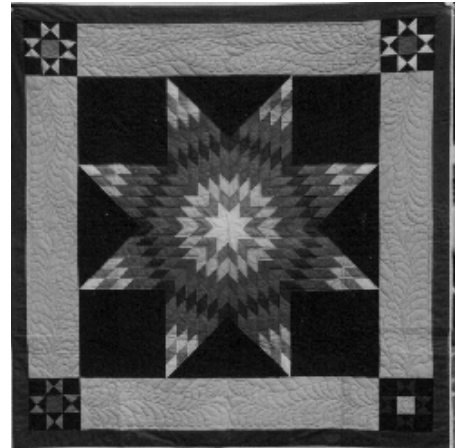
Personal History: Selena's husband Ben works as a maintenance supervisor for the Port of Edmonds and they have two grown sons, Eli and Will. Both sons are single, in business related professions, and have closed their (withdrawal) accounts at the Bank of Mom and Dad. Eli lives at a skydiving zone and conversations about his own jumps only occasionally contain "too much information". For the past five years, Selena was also the primary family caregiver for her mother who had Alzheimer's type dementia and passed away this last summer. "Spending this special time with my mother was a gift that has also sensitized me to the similar experiences of many of my friends and colleagues in our baby boomer age group".

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SOCIAL WORK LEADERSHIP, CONT. SELENA BOLOTIN

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Selena's hobbies include yoga, running, quilting and hiking. She participates in several fun-runs per year, describing herself as possibly the world's slowest runner -- but is grateful for age categories. Selena usually takes the month of October off to camp and day hike in the Southwest, mostly Utah and Colorado. This year's Colorado Plateau hiking adventure was during record breaking rains, allowing Selena to catch up on her reading. A highlight last year was an 11 day boat trip through the Grand Canyon with an opportunity to hike almost daily up from the bottom of the Canyon. "My next plans include setting a goal to get back into backpacking this summer, in our own wonderful Northwest backyard".



Selena made this 60" square quilt which she lent to the Stevens Geropsych unit upon its opening..

The Value of Social Work

Selena had been interested in pursuing a human services career since high school and originally intended to become a psychologist. While taking social work classes for a double major, the graduate social work program reorganized to include a health curriculum and that seemed like the perfect fit. "What continues to interest me about social work is the combination of a systems perspective with the pragmatism of this field. I find that training in systems has been as useful in a leadership position as it was in direct clinical work".

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SSWLHC-WA Chapter Searching for President-Elect

Diedrich Meinken, President and owner of CareForce, currently serving as SSWLHC President-Elect, will become the President of the WA Chapter on January 1, 2007.

Erica Taylor, social worker at the Veterans Administration Medical Center of Puget Sound, is returning to work from maternity leave in December and will begin the second year of her two year term as treasurer of the Chapter.

Board meetings are held by telephone conference call, approximately once a month. The President-Elect's responsibility is to chair a committee that plans three to four seminars a year offering CEUs.

To make a nomination, or receive additional information, please contact Linda Batway, at 360-792-6585 or by email

Discharge Planning Conference Successful, Attendees Identify Additional Learning Needs

The September 22, 2006 Discharge Planning Seminar was held at Stevens Hospital in Edmonds, WA. The Forum earned an overall rating by participants of 4.25 out of a possible 5.0

Presenters: Speakers were Roger Dowdy, VAMC of Puget Sound, on mental health issues, substance abuse and addiction issue, focusing on diversion from readmission; Susan "Sam" Miller ARNP, CareForce, presented material on nurse delegation and medical alarm services. Ted Tanase, President of Total Living Choices for Seniors discussed web based and software products designed to reduce length of stay. Brigitte Folz, Assistant Director Harborview Social Work, discussed a care management model for discharge, and Nancy Riley focused on pediatric discharges and dysfunctional families.

Comments: When asked to comment on additional needs and suggestions, participants responded:

- ▶ Presenters have a great deal of practical experience,
- ▶ Mix of medical/behavioral cases was good,

- ▶ Offer specific strategies on handling challenging discharges including Medicaid/Medicare, low income housing, family care homes, assisted living,
- ▶ Obtain representation from a skilled nursing and home health perspective,
- ▶ Look at specific discharge issues more in depth,
- ▶ Have contact information available for each speaker,
- ▶ Provide materials at start of workshop,
- ▶ More solutions from Harborview re: barriers identified,
- ▶ Too much focus on "selling" commercial programs,
- ▶ Presenters seemed to rush through their information, not enough time allotted to each,
- ▶ Learn more about relationship "challenges" between nurses and social workers in health care settings.



More than 40 participants attended the September 22, 2006 Discharge Planning Conference: "Challenging Discharges: Tools, Tips, Teams and Technologies"

SSWLHC MEMBERSHIP PAGES

2007 SSWLHC LEGISLATIVE FORUM***"HEALTH POLICY,
HEALTHCARE PRIORITIES &
ADVOCACY TRAINING FOR 2007"*****LORNA STONE, MSW,
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS****AND****DON SLOMA, MPH, DIRECTOR OF POLICY
WASHINGTON HEALTH FOUNDATION****WITH****CASSIE SAUER, MSW, DIRECTOR
ADVOCACY & PUBLIC RELATIONS****WASHINGTON STATE HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION****DECEMBER 7, 2006****REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 8:30 AM
CONFERENCE: 9:00 AM TO NOON****GROUP HEALTH COOPERATIVE
CENTRAL CAMPUS
CONFERENCE ROOM A/6-A/7
FIRST FLOOR BY CAFETERIA****125 16TH AVENUE E.,
SEATTLE, WA 98112****To register for this free seminar and 3 CEUs
contact: Linda Batway****SSWLHC PRESENTS THE 2007
LEGISLATIVE FORUM
DEC. 7, 2006, 8:30-NOON**

This year's Legislative Advocacy Forum will provide a broader context to SSWLHC members than ever before. Focusing on health initiatives in Washington State, as well as health care delivery issues and needs, the forum will look at health, health policy, and health systems planning in the context of changing needs and revenues, and give participants a clear understanding of advocacy priorities for the 2007 Legislature.

WASHINGTON HEALTH FOUNDATION

From the Washington Health Foundation (WHF), social worker Lorna Stone, Vice President of Programs, will present with Don Sloma, Director of Policy, the WHF initiatives to make Washington the healthiest state in the nation. They will describe why Washington is currently #14 in health indicators, and what they are doing to promote improvements in health and health care so that we can become #1. They will report on their alliance with the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care, and how they partner with other health organizations to create effective collaborations for rural and urban health planning.

2007 WHF Policy Priority Development: In 2006 their policy priorities included raising awareness of health disparities, improving health systems performance and capacity, insuring healthy homes for all children, removing physical barriers to physical activity, and improving early learning and early intervention services across Washington. Don and Lorna will discuss how WHF policy priorities are being researched and developed for the 2007 Legislative Session.

Lorna Stone, who holds an MSW from the University of Chicago, is responsible for community-based health programs and leadership of WHF's grant programs. She currently serves on the Seattle King County Advisory Council on Aging and Disabilities and the King County United Way Senior Impact Council. Lorna's prior work

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SSWLHC MEMBERSHIP PAGES

A WARM WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The SSWLHC-WA Chapter extends a warm welcome to a number of new members. We are pleased that you have chosen to join this professional organization and invite you to contribute your time and talents to make the organization a strong voice in this community in support of our clients and patients.

Please welcome:

Lily Berbano Social Worker, Richmond Beach Rehab, Shoreline, WA

Stacy Buck, Social Worker, Evergreen Healthcare, Kirkland, WA

Albert Casale, Social Worker, Part time, Providence Hospital, Everett, WA, Valley General, Monroe, WA

Sarah Conway, (We need her address)

Tobi Goldman, Clinical Social Worker, Visiting Nurse Services of the Northwest, Seattle, WA

Chris Kidwell, Social Worker, Rehab, Highline Medical Center, Tukwila, WA

Joan O'Connor, Per Diem Social Worker, Stevens Hospital, Edmonds, WA

Rosanna Pace, Avamere Corporation, Bel Air SNF, Tacoma, WA

Carey Tibbetts-Mattox, Social Worker, Foss Home, Seattle

Alice Walters, (We need her address)

Marilyn Williamson, Social Worker, Central Washington Hospital, Wenatchee, WA.

The Washington Chapter of the SSWLHC is currently involved in several important activities. We offer three to four half day educational seminars a year that provide CEUs for certification and licensure purposes, and we advocate with the WA State legislature on certain state-wide healthcare issues.

We also work at continuing to promote membership in the organization and publish a bi-monthly newsletter on issues of interest to social workers in health care.

Please contact any one of the Committee chairs listed below if you would like to participate or request further information on the activities.

President:: Pam Haithcox, MSW

President Elect: Diedrich Meinken, MSW

Past Pres: Linda Johnson, MSW

Secretary: Laura Collins, MSW

Treasurer: Erica Taylor, MSW

Communications Coordinator, Jacqueline Durgin, MSW

Member at Large: Alice Chang, MSW

Education Chair: Diedrich Meinken, MSW

Membership Chair: Linda Batway, MSSA

Newsletter Editor: Jacqueline Durgin, MSW

Scholarship Chair: Sandi Johnson, MSW

Social Health Policy Chair: Lynn Carrigan, MSW

SSWLHC COMMITTEES

Education: Diedrich Meinken, dmeinken@careforce.com

Membership: Linda Batway,
lindabatway@harrisonmedical.org

Newsletter: Jacqueline Durgin,
jackiedurginbeck@comcast.net

Scholarship: Sandi Johnson,
ssjohnson@evergreenhealthcare.org

Social Health Policy: Lynn Carrigan,
carrigan2006@yahoo.com

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SSWLHC PRESENTS THE 2007 LEGISLATIVE FORUM DECEMBER 7, 2006, 8:30–NOON

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includes nonprofit administration, hospice social work, health promotion and diversity training, and working with rural, chronically ill, and elderly populations.

Don Sloma holds a Master's Degree in Public Health and coordinates the policy leadership activities of WHF. He develops policy priorities and strategies and promotes the public policy agenda in collaboration with other health organizations. Don has more than 30 years' experience as a health policy advisor, primarily to the Washington State Legislature. He also served as Executive Director of the Washington State Board of Health. Don is an adjunct UW faculty member in Public Health and serves as the State Affiliate Representative to the Governing Council of the American Public Health Association

WASHINGTON STATE HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Cassie Sauer, MSW and Director of Advocacy and Public Relations for WSHA, will talk about legislative composition, leadership, and legislative priorities related to health care and hospital systems. This will be the fifth year Cassie has met with SSWLHC to provide much-needed information and education on upcoming health-related bills and budget items.

2007 WSHA Policy Priority Development: As of early November, Cassie stated that WSHA is still fleshing out their 2007 priorities, but expect policy interests to include:

- * followup on last year's initiative to cover all kids by 2010, by putting a meaningful plan in place with the money needed to make health coverage possible, including outreach, education, and coverage itself;
- * adding more Basic Health Plan slots (probably 10,000 or 20,000);
- * increase in the Medicaid rate paid to hospitals
- * increase in the payment rate for state-paid mental health patients, currently so low that many hospitals are

closing their inpatient psychiatric units;

* restrictions on specialty hospitals (single-service hospitals that have no ER, don't usually accept Medicaid/care, and only treat the healthy and wealthy).

SSWLHC MEMBER PRIORITIES

SSWLHC/WA members have also asked that we develop a plan for promoting other health-related needs, such as universal healthcare. Our President-elect, Dietrich Mienken, would like to see us sponsor or endorse at a minimum a task force or study of options for Washington State.

Also of interest is improved access to background check information for all people working with vulnerable populations, including health care workers, home care, long term care, child care, etc. At present only limited information is available to those who hire health care workers, putting employers and the public at unnecessary risk.

SSWLHC ADVOCACY MATERIALS AND PLANNING

The annual Advocacy Forum provides members with an opportunity to earn free CEU's. Please join us at this session, and at the NASW Lobby Day, to be held on President's Day, February 19, 2007, from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at the General Services Administration Building Auditorium at the State Capitol. If you can assist with writing position papers, visits to legislators, writing letters, or other advocacy efforts, please contact Lynn Carrigan, SSWLHC Social Policy Chair, at 206-221-7459 (carrigan2006@yahoo.com).

Pre-registration for workshop is required

In order to assist us with planning food and space set-up, please register by December 5 by contacting Linda Batway, Director of Social Work, Harrison Memorial Hospital, lindabatway@harrisonmedical.org, call 1-360-792-6585; or fax 360-792-6827.

FYI: RESOURCE FACTS

DID YOU KNOW:

Property Tax Relief Grants are available for veterans' surviving spouses?

Grants are available to qualifying senior citizens for the disabled under the WA State Property Tax Assistance Program for Widows or Widowers of Veterans. Applicants must be 62 years old, own and occupy their own home, and have a combined disposable income of \$40,000 or less. Relief provided under this grant program is in addition to assistance provided by the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Exemption Program, also administered by the Department of Revenue. For more information and requirements, go to <http://dor.wa.gov>, or call the grant administrator at 360-570-5873, or contact the Veterans' Service Center at 1-800-562-2308.

Source: Dept. of Revenue, WA State & Seattle Times 11/13/06

A new federal law will require Newborns to prove US citizenship for Medicaid eligibility?

At this time in WA State, there is no change in policy regarding infants born to undocumented and other non-citizen mothers. However, there is discussion at the state level regarding federal policy around the issue and whether Washington State will need to make changes.

Currently, newborns born to mothers receiving DSHS Pregnancy Medical automatically receive one year of coverage. If WA State is forced to implement the stated federal policy, non-citizen mothers receiving State Pregnancy Medical would be required to complete a new medical application for the newborn. These newborn babies could be without coverage until all required paperwork is in and until DSHS can process and approve the application

Source: "QUICKNOTES" of the NW Regional Primary Care Association

DSHS will no longer pay Medicare C premiums effective January 1, 2007?

Effective 1/1/07, the Department of Social and Health Services has ended the Medicare Advantage premium payment program for all clients except those patients receiving long term care and who are participating in the cost of their care, may be allowed Part C premiums as a medical deduction in determining participation. Clients have been notified and are advised to "(1) call or write to find out how you can pay your Medicare Advantage premium: or (2) Join a Medicare Advantage plan that costs less. Right now there are some no or low-cost Medicare Advantage plans in Washington State, or (3) Disenroll from your Medicare Advantage plan and get your Medicare benefits from the regular Medicare program".

Beginning January 1, 2007, the Medicare Advantage plans have been instructed to start billing the client/patient if they have not disenrolled.

There are no fair hearing rights when DSHS stops paying the patients' Medicare Advantage (Part C) premiums. Federal law does not require DSHS to pay for Medicare Advantage Part C premiums. Medicaid recipients do not have a right to challenge a decision of DSHS to modify benefits that are consistent with federal law) that is applicable to a group of recipients.

DSHS will continue to open QMB, SLMB and QI-I programs when clients are eligible. The State Medicaid program will continue to pay Medicare Part A and Part B premiums for eligible Medicare beneficiaries.

For additional information: call 1-800-562-3022.

Source: Memo to CSD, CSO, HCS Administrators of 9/29/06, Client Medicare Advantage (Part C) Termination Letter Text; both authored by Peggy Wilson, Interim Director, Div. of Eligibility and

Update -Blue Ribbon Commission to Improve Access to Affordable Quality Healthcare

By Pam Haithcox, MSW, SSWLHC-WA President

As reported previously in the SSWLHC newsletter, earlier this year Governor Gregoire formed a Blue Ribbon commission "to find ways to provide accessible, affordable, quality health care for all Washingtonians." The commission is co-chaired by Senator Pat Thibaudeau and Governor Gregoire and held its first meeting on June 6, 2006 in Olympia. The goal of this group is to examine the state of Washington's health care system and to develop a five-year strategic plan that will allow for affordable and accessible health care to all. The meetings have been open to the public and the members have heard proposals and welcomed input from the public and special interest groups.

Five Forums Held Thus Far: Since June 6, there have been five additional public forums held in SeaTac, Olympia and Tumwater. The commission has received 64 different written proposals and ideas. Groups such as Group Health Cooperative, Labor Ready, Lifelong AIDS Alliance and our own past president – Linda Johnson, submitted the proposals. The proposals can be viewed in summary or in their entirety at <http://www1.leg.wa.gov/Joint/Committees/HCCA/>.

The vision of the commission that was adopted on July 27, 2006 is:

"In Improving Access:

All Washingtonians will have access to health coverage that provides effective care by 2012, with all children having such coverage by 2010.

In Improving Health:

Washington will be one of the top ten healthiest states in the nation.

Population health indicators will be consistent across race, gender and income levels throughout the state.

Increased use of evidence-based care brings better

health outcomes and satisfaction to consumers.

In Improving Affordability:

The rate of increase in total health care spending will be no more than the growth in personal income."

The next public meeting of the commission is the final one and is scheduled for November 28th. The Commission's recommendations to the Governor will be published after that.

Governor Gregoire has indicated that this initiative is very high on her priority list. Impressively, the process has been an open one with feedback being sought from a wide variety of stakeholders. If accomplished, the commission recommendations could lead to a plan that could dramatically improve the health of the children and residents of the state of Washington. Please take the opportunity to attend the remaining open meeting or follow the progress and recommendations on the Blue Ribbon Commission website cited above.



Pam Haithcox, President, SSWLHC WA Chapter
Harborview Medical Center, Seattle, 206-731-4055 or
haithcox@u.washington.edu

Linda Johnson, MSW, Submits Proposal to Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission to Provide Access to Affordable Quality Healthcare for all Washington Residents

In September 2006, in response to a request for proposal, Linda Johnson, former SSWLHC-WA Chapter President and current executive committee member, submitted a plan with the League of Women Voters for consideration by the Governor's Blue Ribbon Committee. The SSWLHC has not formally endorsed this plan but there are many points to which many members agree. Linda has offered an excerpt for the membership to review.

"In 2007:

Children: Declare all children 'covered' for all outpatient office visits, including well-baby care; pre-natal care; post-natal care; mental health; yearly physicals; illness visits; dental care; and prescription drugs.

Establish a reasonable rate of payment to providers – possibly different in rural/urban areas. Pay it to any licensed provider who provides primary care to children, e.g., a general practitioner, family practice physician, pediatrician, ARNP, or others.

Primary Care Providers for Children: Allow any child to go to any primary care provider (PCP). If the child has insurance, the office can bill it. But any child will be covered for outpatient care by the State of Washington at the established rate, if there is no other source of payment.

Providers will not be able to restrict the number of state-insured children as they often do with Medicaid.

Specialist Referrals: Referrals to specialists should be processed through a managed care matrix. The reimbursement rate should not be dramatically higher than that established for primary care providers. It is possible that co-pays or deductibles might be part of this payment arrangement for specialists.

The rationale for this plan: The state has a strong interest in assuring the healthy development of children.

There should be no barriers in the way of children getting the prevention and early health care they need, so there would be no need to "enroll," no co-pays, no deductibles, and no premiums for parents of children to pay for routine outpatient care. And, we would waste no money or resources of promoting enrollment, checking eligibility, etc., but would simply provide services.

Provider Fees and Payments: Providers need to be part of the decision-making process about reasonable rates of payment so that does not present a barrier to care. Providing outpatient care can be a relatively predictable and manageable expense. The probable increasing reliance of families on state insurance for outpatient care for children will substantially decrease the administrative burden in outpatient offices for billing numerous different insurance companies. I would assume that when a bill for a child first comes to the State for payment, someone would contact the family to determine if they might be eligible for the more comprehensive benefit package available through Medicaid, and encourage/assist the family to apply. I also think that some working families who may be buying family coverage through work even though it is a serious strain on their finances, might drop the coverage for children, and move the children into this state plan. In essence, I would process the payments for these children as if they were part of the Basic Health Plan, but with the benefits indicated above specifically for children.

In 2008

Extend the same level of outpatient primary care to all adults, including OB-GYNs and internists in the PCP coverage group.

Continued on Page 14

Linda Johnson's Proposal to Governors Blue Ribbon Committee, Cont.

During 07 and 08

Leave Medicare and Medicaid intact as they are – the huge bulk (probably 90% of spending) of those programs go for the care of the elderly, disabled, chronically ill, etc

Funding

Flat Rate Income Tax: I would establish a modified flat rate income tax to cover the costs of healthcare for the next 10 years, and plan to phase any income generated by the income tax into the general fund in 10 years, as the savings from universal coverage should begin to be apparent by then. I'd set up an income tax system in with no deductions for house mortgages, for children, or for anything else. I'd use the federal tax return to determine the total amount of gross income on which any individual would be responsible for paying state income taxes."

For comments/Discussion, Linda Johnson, MSW, can be located at swlkj@comcast.net

EMERALD HEIGHTS

SOCIAL SERVICES COORDINATOR

Emerald Heights, a non-profit Continuous Care Retirement Community, seeks a Part Time social services professional to assist the Social Services Coordinator in administering to the psychosocial needs of the residents in our skilled nursing facility. Position is 3 weekdays a week, 8 hour shifts. Requires a Bachelors degree in social services or related field, experience with the elder community preferred.

Send resume to:

Human Resources,
10901 176th Circle NE,
Redmond, WA 98052

or fax 425-558-9565. Visit web site

www.emeraldheights.com

AUBURN

Regional Medical Center

Temporary Social Work Position Now
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Maintains performance improvement activities within the department and participates in COI activities.

MSW, Licensure,

3 years of experience required

Contact www.auburnregional.com or
melinda.bass@uhsinc.com



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