

Health Care

JULY 15, 2009

Health care coverage for Washington citizens varies when comparing the number of adults insured to the number of children insured according to a health care performance report delivered today to the Governor and her Leadership Team.

Basic Health Care enrollments continue to decline in order to address the 42% cut in the Basic Health budget. For May 2009, enrollments were down to 99,585 from April's enrollment of 102,205. However, as of February 2009, nearly 73,000 more eligible children were receiving state-subsidized health care coverage since July 2007. In 20 months, the State has reached and surpassed its target of 38,500 new eligible children covered by June 2009. State-subsidized children's health care coverage has grown steadily since the implementation of the Governor Gregoire's eligibility policy in 2005.

The state's health care agencies – the departments of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Health Care Authority (HCA), and Health (DOH) also reported on youth tobacco use, health technology assessments and medical costs. Highlights from today's report include:

- From February 2008 to April 2009, over one million Washingtonians received the Prescription Drug Program card. The department reached their monthly enrollment target six months early, and over the last four months, the Health Care Authority (HCA) has averaged 103,000 Prescription Drug Program card enrollments per month.
- In 2008, 14.4% of Washington state 10th graders reported they had smoked a cigarette in the last 30 days. This is about the same rate as in 2006 according to a state survey, which is conducted every two years and is taken by more than 210,000 public school kids in grades six, eight, 10 and 12. The Department of Health is pursuing strategies to continue to reduce tobacco use among youth.
- The primary purpose of Health Technology Assessment is to ensure medical treatments and services paid for with state health care dollars are safe and proven to work. Because of the length of the process, only eight health technologies will undergo this rigorous process in 2009. Of the eight health technologies assessments selected for evidence based review; one (Cardiac Stent (Off-label Use)) was completed and approved for coverage in May 2009.
- In fiscal year 2008, DSHS medical programs per capita costs increased at a faster rate (6.0%) than Washington's per capita personal income (5.3%). Although DSHS has little influence over what happens with Washington's per capita personal income, the agency is taking a number of steps to influence medical programs per capita costs. An example is to reduce transportation, x-ray, and laboratory expenditures by approximately four percent of their total expenditures for the 2009-11 Biennium by lowering the amounts paid by DSHS and/or taking steps to control utilization.

For more information, visit the web-based tool used to manage agency performance:

<http://performance.wa.gov/HealthCare/Healthcare71509/Pages/Default.aspx>