

Health Reform in Alameda County: A Year-long Conversation Series hosted by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors Health Committee

National health reform means major changes for health care delivery in Alameda County. With new federal rules and money provided by the 2010 Affordable Care Act, more than 150,000 people in Alameda County will be newly covered by Medi-Cal or private insurance by 2018.

Additionally, health care providers are preparing for major delivery system changes, including expanded availability of medical homes and integrated care delivery through accountable care organizations (ACOs).

Alameda County Board of Supervisors Health Committee members Wilma Chan and Keith Carson have planned a year-long conversation series to discuss local implementation of the Affordable Care Act. The series' goal is to help Alameda County prepare for the opportunities and challenges associated with health reform in 2014 and beyond.

The hearings will address a different issue area each month, featuring experts and local community health leaders. Combining the "big picture" with local specifics and community feedback hopefully will lead to policy recommendations for Alameda County. Harbage Consulting, a health care consulting group, has been asked to facilitate these meetings with support from the Alameda Alliance for Health.

Health Reform Hearings Schedule

The topics for the earlier hearings are set, but Harbage Consulting is seeking input from stakeholders regarding key issue areas for discussion at future hearings. The health committee meets from 9 am to 10:30 am at the County Board of Supervisors Chambers in Room 512 of the County Administration Building at 1221 Oak Street, Downtown Oakland.

2011

November 14: Overview of the Affordable Care Act and Alameda County

This kick-off session provided an introduction to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and summary of issues that may impact Alameda County.

December 12: Health Reform's Impacts on Acute Care Delivery

The ACA includes provisions that will impact hospital service delivery, including the increased number of people with insurance who now will be able to choose where they receive care. New financial reimbursement structures encourage hospitals to become part of larger coordinated networks of care and improve patient transitions back to the community. This hearing will provide an overview of these provisions and perspectives from local hospital directors about a post-reform care delivery system.

2012

January 30: Improving Care Delivery for Dual Eligibles: Aligning Incentives and Coordinating Long-term Care Supports and Services

Dual Eligibles are individuals who receive both Medicare and Medi-Cal benefits. Most have multiple chronic conditions that make them among the most vulnerable and expensive patients in the system. California is developing new models of coordinated care delivery for dual eligibles. This conversation will examine the opportunities and challenges with this proposal statewide and locally.

February 27: Preparing the Primary Care System for Health Reform

Access to primary care will be an ongoing issue as more people gain health coverage. This session will discuss new models for delivering primary care, such as patient-centered medical homes and new competition for patients among providers.

March 26: Laying the Foundation of Strong Eligibility and Enrollment Systems

Roughly 56,000 Alameda County residents will be eligible for the Medi-Cal expansion. The County will be responsible for enrolling them using new, simplified tools. This session will focus on ways to promote enrollment, needed cooperation with local unions, and the development of California's Health Benefits Exchange that will help people purchase private insurance coverage starting in 2014.

April 23: Innovation in Prevention

In contrast to the current system, health reform prioritizes prevention of disease. Additionally, providers are leveraging grants to work on improving integration of physical, mental health and substance use services. This session will look at new funding and initiatives available and what Alameda County is doing locally in these key areas.

May 21: Building a Strong Health Care Workforce

With an additional 150,000 people insured in 2018, additional workforce will be needed to ensure all Alameda County residents have adequate access to care. This session will provide an overview of projected workforce needs, and an update on local efforts to develop tomorrow's diverse and capable health care workforce.

June 25: Care Portals: Expanding Access and Reducing Unnecessary Care

Retooling emergency medical services to focus on prevention and avoidance of the hospital and emergency department are major opportunities for expanding access to care and saving public dollars. Alameda County is at the forefront of this arena. This session will provide a summary of innovations in EMS occurring nationally and locally.

JULY: Summer BREAK

August 27: Issues around Oral Health

This session will address oral health issues. It will also look at how counties and states are managing to move forward in light of budget and political uncertainty.

September 24: Understanding Changes in the Health Insurance Market

Health reform means transformative changes to the health insurance market – from increased regulation of private insurers' enrollment practices and profit to purchasing subsidies for individuals and families earning up to 400% FPL. This session will provide updates on the State Health Benefits Exchange and local insurers' plans for recruitment and enrollment.

October 22: Health Information Exchanges and Coordinating Care Delivery

Health Information Exchanges will be a critical component of a health care system capable of providing coordinated care across the delivery system. This session will provide an overview of the national and statewide issues related to these exchanges, as well as an overview of Alameda County's current status of electronic medical records and interoperability.

November 5: Building Strong Linkages to Specialty Care

Health reform encourages transformation of the health care system. This session will examine new models of care delivery promoted by the ACA and how they're being developed in Alameda County. It will look at models trying to coordinate patient services along the continuum of care from prevention to specialty to care to acute care.

December 10: The Patient Experience

The yearlong series will culminate with an examination of the local health care delivery system through the lens of patients. Consumer experts and local patients will share stories about care delivery experiences, needs, concerns and priorities.