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Stop the COVID Spread! Coalition: "The Fight's Not Over Yet"

WHA-led coalition launches new ad campaign promoting continued use of face masks, social distancing and hand washing as key measures in the fight against COVID-19

The Stop the COVID Spread! coalition, which the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) founded, leads and provides the majority funding for, launched a new ad campaign this week calling on Wisconsinites to stay vigilant in the effort to curtail the spread of COVID-19. The ad campaign that will broadcast statewide on digital and broadcast media stresses the importance of wearing face masks, washing hands regularly, and continuing to practice social distancing as key, simple measures in the fight against the global pandemic.



The Stop the COVID Spread! coalition's new ad promotes the continued use of face masks.

"This past year, Wisconsin came together to take on COVID-19. Our frontline workers, businesses and communities stepped up. And you are doing your part," says the narrator in the ad. "We will stop the spread, but the fight's not over yet. As many await vaccines, and our health care heroes battle new strains, we can't let our guard down now."

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EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

February 24

The 2021 Board Agenda
Webinar

February 25

Surviving the Pandemic: A Year in Review
and Look Ahead
Webinar

March 12 (Virtual)

September 14-15 (In-person)

2021 Physician Leadership Development
Conference

Attorney General Kaul Announces Emergency Detention Coalition Recommendations

WHA applauds the collaboration; much work ahead

Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) President and CEO Eric Borgerding participated in a virtual press conference on Feb. 11 hosted by Attorney General Josh Kaul announcing a set of [policy and non-policy recommendations](#) to address emergency detention challenges in Wisconsin. Also joining Attorney General Kaul at the announcement were Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) Interim Secretary Karen Timberlake as well as representatives from local law enforcement, county human services agencies and consumers.

"WHA applauds Attorney General Kaul's proactive engagement and collaboration with the Wisconsin Hospital Association, law enforcement, the Wisconsin Counties Association, the Department of Health Services, consumers and others to develop a set of consensus recommendations that take a holistic approach to improve Wisconsin's mental health emergency detention process," said Borgerding. "Every year, thousands of individuals in psychiatric crisis arrive at Wisconsin hospital

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emergency departments,” said Borgerding. “Sometimes, those individuals are a danger to themselves or others but due to their mental illness are unwilling to voluntarily receive stabilizing care. To navigate these complex involuntary emergency detention situations, hospitals, law enforcement, county human services, and courts all play unique but interconnected roles in Wisconsin’s emergency detention system.”

The [recommendations](#) from the coalition include:

- Establishing regional crisis assessment and stabilization facilities;
- Expanding mental mobile crisis teams;
- Expanding crisis intervention team (CIT) training;
- Moving away from a centralized state facility model for involuntary, high acuity, short term inpatient psychiatric stabilization;
- Promoting greater voluntary utilization of the medical clearance SMART form;
- Exploring options to further utilize the WHA Psychiatric Bed Locator to improve the efficiency of the emergency detention system; and
- Expanding telemedicine and audio-video technologies in the emergency detention process, including in emergency detention related court proceedings.



Borgerding also commented on Wisconsin’s acute behavioral health workforce shortage, citing a recent DHS report finding that Wisconsin has a 117 FTE shortage of psychiatrists. He noted WHA-championed state graduate medical education matching grant program that is helping to graduate 25 additional psychiatrists in Wisconsin each year. Borgerding said that adding additional mental health beds will be challenging unless Wisconsin has the workforce resources to staff those beds.

“The consensus recommendations organized by the attorney general provide a conceptual framework for improving Wisconsin’s often fragmented and inefficient county-based emergency detention system,” said Borgerding. “Challenges will remain, but these recommendations bring additional focus and stakeholder agreement on clear next steps to improve and reform Wisconsin’s emergency detention system that will benefit communities and patients.”

The attorney general’s announcement followed yesterday’s press release from Governor Tony Evers previewing a number of behavioral health proposals that will be in his proposed 2021-23 state budget to be released next week. Attorney General Kaul and Interim Secretary Timberlake noted areas of alignment between the proposals. Governor Evers’ press release can be found [here](#).

New Three-Month Open Enrollment Window for Exchange Marketplace

Under an executive order issued by President Biden, the federal health insurance exchange marketplace—[healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov)—will re-open for a special enrollment period from Feb. 15 through May 15, 2021. The Biden administration indicates this option is necessary as the COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges for individuals to access health insurance coverage.

At the end of December, 191,702 Wisconsinites had signed up for coverage through the insurance exchange in Wisconsin. Typically, health insurance coverage in the individual market can be purchased only during open enrollment from November through mid-December prior to the benefit year. Special enrollment periods are then offered throughout the year for individual circumstances that might constitute a “qualifying event,” such as having a child, getting married or losing a job.

During the upcoming special three-month window, consumers will not need to provide documentation of a qualifying event. Anyone who missed the original enrollment deadline will now be able to sign up, and people who are already enrolled will be able to change their plan. According to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, coverage for consumers who enroll under this special enrollment period will begin the first of the month after they select a plan.

Thus far, this special open enrollment window is only available for coverage through the federal health insurance exchange in which Wisconsin participates. However, on Feb. 9, the Wisconsin Office of the Insurance Commissioner released a [bulletin](#) encouraging insurers to offer a similar special open enrollment period for products offered outside of the exchange marketplace.

WHA Courtroom Advocacy: Wisconsin Supreme Court Upholds Re-Commitment Statute

The Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Wisconsin's [mental health re-commitment statute](#) in a [5-2 decision](#) on Feb. 9. The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA), the Wisconsin Counties Association and the Wisconsin Association of County Corporation Counsels filed an amicus brief with the court in November supporting the constitutionality of the re-commitment statute.

Together, the three organizations raised concerns to the Supreme Court that Wisconsin would see a “revolving door” of new Chapter 51 emergency detentions if the court invalidated the re-commitment statute in *Waupaca County v. K.E.K.* The Supreme Court agreed and concluded that “addressing the ‘revolving door’ phenomena is a reasonable basis for the different evidentiary avenues [for re-commitment] and the fifth standard.”

The case was brought by an individual identified as K.E.K. who was re-committed to involuntary treatment by order of a Waupaca County court on a finding, supported by medical evidence, that K.E.K. posed a “substantial likelihood, based on [her] treatment record,” that she would pose a danger to herself or others if treatment were withdrawn. K.E.K. argued that the “substantial likelihood” standard for re-commitment was unconstitutional and that a county must present a “current overt act or omission establishing dangerousness” in order to continue an involuntary commitment.

“Our courts have acknowledged the ‘clear intent of the Legislature in amending sec. 51.20(1)(am)...was to avoid the ‘revolving door’ phenomena whereby there must be proof of a recent overt act to extend the commitment but because the patient was still under treatment, no overt acts occurred and the patient was released from treatment only to commit a dangerous act and be recommitted,’” stated the WHA joint amicus brief. For hospitals, the revolving door would result in “more resources spent to safely manage, evaluate and stabilize an unnecessary influx of involuntary patients in psychiatric crisis coming to general emergency departments.”

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul also filed an [amicus brief](#) in support of the constitutionality of the re-commitment statute. Kaul's amicus brief also raised concerns that invalidating the re-commitment statute would increase the number of emergency detentions in Wisconsin.

If you have questions about the case, contact WHA General Counsel [Matthew Stanford](#).



WHA Joins RWHC for Rural Health Virtual Advocacy in D.C.

On Feb. 11, the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) joined the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC) and health care leaders from across Wisconsin to advocate for rural health care priorities. While COVID has put a damper on physical travel to Washington, D.C., these virtual meetings provide a convenient option for busy hospital and health system leaders to speak directly with their federal members of Congress.

Among a number of important topics covered were the 340B prescription drug discount program, the COVID vaccine rollout, and changes made to reimbursement of rural health clinics in the year-end COVID package signed into law by former President Donald Trump on Dec. 30, 2020.

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In speaking with Congressman Mark Pocan, Black River Memorial Hospital President and CEO Mary Beth White-Jacobs explained how her hospital is able to provide chemotherapy infusion right in Jackson County, something they would not be able to do without savings from 340B. Stoughton Health President and CEO Dan DeGroot also described how savings from 340B helps his hospital fund one of the only geriatric psychiatric inpatient hospitals in the state, which serves patients with severe dementia from 16 different counties surrounding the Madison area.

Unfortunately, some drug makers have stopped paying 340B discounts at contract pharmacies, leaving hospitals to bear the increased cost. Congressman Mark Pocan said he continues to support the 340B program and intends to sign onto a letter in the U.S. House of Representatives to incoming Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra. The letter urges HHS to enforce the requirement that drug makers provide discounts regardless of whether drugs are dispensed at in-house or contract pharmacies and to reimburse hospitals for discounts that were unlawfully denied.

Participants also discussed changes to the rural health clinic (RHC) reimbursement model made in the 2020 year-end COVID package. Like rural critical access hospitals, rural health clinics received enhanced reimbursement from Medicare based on their costs. This is designed to keep access to care in rural communities, where there are often not enough people on commercial insurance to offset low Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements.

Because some RHCs have their reimbursement capped, the year-end COVID package attempted to narrow the gap between capped and uncapped RHCs. While there was no intention of lowering any existing RHC's reimbursement, a drafting error would



require any RHC that began operations after Dec. 31, 2019, to receive a lower, capped reimbursement. Rural health supporters are advocating for delaying that unintentional date to a later date, so that existing RHCs and those in the process of being certified would not have to receive a lower reimbursement than budgeted for.

Door County Medical Center (DCMC) President and CEO Brian Stephens discussed how important RHC reimbursement has been for keeping access to care in Door County and its surrounding rural locations. He noted the telehealth reimbursement model for RHCs needs to take costs into consideration in order to keep operations viable so we can maintain access to care in rural areas. Congressman Mike Gallagher said

he remembered discussing this issue when former HHS Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan visited DCMC last summer and supports finding a long-term solution that keeps rural care and telehealth offerings in rural communities.

Rural health care leaders also discussed how the COVID vaccine rollout is going in their communities, something Congressman Glenn Grothman was very interested to hear. Prairie Ridge Health (Columbus) Vice President of Patient Care Services Jamie Hendrix and ThedaCare Vice President of Berlin and Wild Rose Medical Centers Tammy Bending noted the vaccine rollout has been improving, with more people aged 65 and older getting vaccinated every day, but supply constraints continue to make it difficult to keep appointments when hospitals receive fewer doses than they anticipate. Overall, COVID activity has been decreasing, and hospitals are optimistic that trend will continue to improve as more people are vaccinated.



Rural Physician Roundtable Highlights Vaccine Shortage, Physician Stress

Participants in the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) quarterly Rural Physicians Roundtable held on Feb. 4 expressed a consensus view that greater COVID-19 vaccine supplies are needed to fully leverage the state's vaccination capacity. The 18 physician attendees also cited and welcomed news of falling COVID infection rates throughout the state.

Attendees also discussed the ongoing challenge of recruitment and retention of hospital staff in rural hospitals as well as the increased stress that practitioners nationwide are feeling as a result of the pandemic and the extra time required for electronic medical record (EMR) documentation. Physician resiliency, a topic of national conversation, requires attention as such work-related stress can affect both job performance and satisfaction.

Other topics discussed by the group included hospital visitor policies, optimal designs for waiting rooms to minimize the spread of infection and how to best manage the release of laboratory results to patient in a manner that assures that sensitive results are communicated personally to patients. These topics will be included in future roundtable agendas.

For questions about WHA Physician Roundtables, contact Chief Medical Officer [Chris Green, M.D.](#)

Catherine Jacobson Named MMAC Board Chair-Elect

Froedtert Health CEO and WHA board member brings health care expertise to Milwaukee business association



The Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) has named past Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) Board Chair and current WHA Audit Committee Chair Catherine Jacobson chair-elect of its board of directors.

"I'm honored by the opportunity to lead the MMAC at such an important time for our region," Jacobson said. "I look forward to advancing the significant strategies MMAC and its member companies are pursuing to help everyone in the Milwaukee Region realize our opportunities and address our challenges as we navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm confident my experience leading our health care system throughout the COVID-19 crisis will help our members amplify our efforts and make a real impact on the metro Milwaukee community."

Jacobson joined Froedtert Health in 2010 as executive vice president of finance and strategy, chief financial officer and chief strategy officer. She was promoted in 2011, becoming president, and in 2012, she assumed the CEO role. Prior to joining Froedtert Health, Jacobson spent 22 years at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago in various leadership roles.

Jacobson has been an active member of WHA's board since 2013, serving as chair of various committees and participating in a number of task forces. She was WHA board chair in 2017 and currently serves an unlimited term as chair of the association's audit committee.

"I applaud MMAC's appointment of Catherine Jacobson as the association's chair-elect," said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. "MMAC has long recognized the important synergies and partnerships that exist between health care providers and employers, as well as the important role hospitals and health systems play in a community's economic vibrancy. Jacobson's vision and leadership will serve the association well as we look forward to emerging from COVID-19 and creating new opportunities for good health and prosperity in our state."

Register for WHA Physician Leadership Development Conference Virtual and In-Person Events

In response to attendee feedback and continued prohibitions on public gatherings, the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) is adapting its Physician Leadership Development Conference to include two distinct, but complementary professional development opportunities, one virtual and one in-person.

The Physician Leader Learning Day, a virtual conference, will take place March 12, 2021. The Physician Knowledge Sharing Event is planned as an in-person event in Kohler Sept. 14-15, 2021. Both events offer continuing medical education-certified instruction focused on developing leadership skills, while also providing a forum for discussion, networking and collegiality. Registration is inclusive of both sessions.

Complete event information and registration is available [here](#). If you have questions regarding this event or any other WHA educational opportunity, email education@wha.org.



(Stop the COVID Spread! Coalition: “The Fight’s Not Over Yet” . . . continued from page 1)

The launch of the Stop the Covid Spread! coalition’s public education announcement comes amidst a trend of falling COVID-19 cases, which could create a false sense of security. New strains of the virus that appear to be both more transmissible and potentially more deadly are spreading worldwide. Vaccine distribution in the state is also being hampered by a shortage of supply from the federal government, meaning much of the state’s vaccination capacity is being underutilized. By continuing to practice safe behaviors, including wearing masks, social distancing, and washing hands, we not only stop the spread, we also save lives.

“Given the current pace of vaccination in Wisconsin, it will take some time for the vaccine to take hold in the state,” said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. “And regardless of the political debates taking place in Madison, masks and other mitigation behaviors are critical factors in our COVID-19 fight. We’ve made great progress, and the health care community is very thankful for all that Wisconsin has done to slow COVID down, but we need to keep at it—mask up, maintain social distance and wash hands.”

Since its launch in October, the “Stop the COVID Spread!” coalition has advanced an aggressive campaign encouraging the use of crucial safety measures to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Coalition messaging has included public education announcements featuring a wide range of Wisconsin voices, including frontline health care workers from health systems throughout Wisconsin, members of the Green Bay Packers, Wisconsin Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, Congressman Mark Pocan, and UW System President Tommy Thompson, many of whom appear in the most recent ad.

“We are incredibly proud of the hard work and sacrifice that Wisconsinites have made over the past year, from the frontline workers in so many critical industries to the doctors, nurses and other health care personnel fighting this virus on a daily basis,” said Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce President and CEO Kurt Bauer. “It is time to double down on our efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19. We must continue to wear a mask, wash our hands and practice social distancing.”

The “Stop the COVID Spread!” coalition currently includes more than 135 of Wisconsin’s leading health care, business, and advocacy organizations. Notable coalition members include the Milwaukee Brewers, Milwaukee Bucks, Green Bay Packers and representatives of local governments, chambers of commerce, and visitors bureaus from every corner of the state. The organizations have joined together with a shared goal of furthering public education about the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wisconsin and the critical need for preventative measures.

You can watch the new ad [here](#).

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