

WHA Medicaid Policy Expert Featured on Wisconsin Health News Medicaid Panel

WHA's Senior Vice President of Public Policy Joanne Alig joined a panel of Medicaid stakeholders at a Wisconsin Health News Luncheon on May 9 in Madison. Alig and the panelists discussed the main issues impacting the Medicaid program, including dynamics of the program's redetermination of the eligibility process due to the ending of the public health emergency and pressures on hospitals that are putting access to care in jeopardy.

Other panelists included Director of State Budget and Government Reform for the Institute for Reforming Government Alex Ignatowski; Medicaid Director for the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) Jamie Kuhn; CEO of Access Community Health Centers Dr. Ken Loving; President of Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Medicaid-Wisconsin Ted Osthelder; and Rep. Donna Rozar (R-Marshfield).



From Left: Rep. Donna Rozar, Alex Ignatowski, Joanne Alig

Representing a range of Medicaid stakeholders, the panelists presented differing perspectives on the issues impacting the Medicaid program, its challenges and what they see for the future. Responding to Ignatowski's concern for the government's sustainability of the Medicaid program, Alig pointed out government's underfunding of the program has made maintaining access to care unsustainable for hospitals.

Alig said, "Wisconsin hospitals are reimbursed [by Medicaid] 67 cents on the dollar of cost. As we talk about sustainability, that is quickly becoming unsustainable."

Alig explained further the combination of challenges with government payers making up about 60% of hospitals' payer mix, health care workforce shortages and financial pressures on providers are having a direct impact on health care access. She said when hospitals are no longer able to cost shift, "the tradeoff is access." Hospitals must make difficult decisions on which services they can continue to provide and which services they cannot. "Those are really hard choices—not easy choices to make—and not where hospitals want to be," added Alig.

A recording of the panel presentation is available on WisconsinEye: [Wisconsin Health News: The Future of Medicaid \(May 9, 2023\)](#).

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