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Thursday, June 16, 2022

Proposed Wis. Rule Would Add at Least \$64 Million in New Health Care Costs Annually

WHA submitted economic impact comments to the Wisconsin Medical Examining Board this week raising concerns about a proposed rule that would create a presumption that a physician has engaged in sexual misconduct unless the physician's care is observed by a trained chaperone, or a narrow set of exceptions apply.

"WHA continues to receive concerns from our members that the proposed rule, including the latest May 3, 2022, version of the proposed rule has an unnecessarily and unreasonably broad impact on care delivery that will significantly exacerbate current critical health care workforce shortage challenges and substantially increase health care staffing costs," wrote WHA Senior Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk.

"Simply adding additional chaperone duties that are not medically necessary for the care of the patient to existing hourly or salaried staff or students is not operationally feasible," wrote Zenk. "Existing staff and students do not have 'extra' time in their workday to serve as chaperones to observe physicians providing care to their patients."

Working with WHA, a group of WHA members also submitted their own comments as part of the Medical Examining Board's economic impact comment period. Seven WHA members submitted comment letters that together estimated at least \$64 million in annual additional staffing costs and require almost 1,100 new full-time staff to observe physician exams as contemplated by the proposed rule. Based on the limited sample size, the statewide total impact is likely significantly higher.

"Health care delivery is chronically overregulated, impacting workforce burnout and cost of care. The proposed rule is one quantifiable example of the very real impact that unnecessary regulation of health care delivery has on the cost of health care," said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. "WHA will continue to lead to identify and push back against unnecessary regulations that increase the cost of delivering high-quality health care."

WHA and individual member comment letters were submitted as part of the economic impact analysis stage of rulemaking. Under Wisconsin statute, agencies are required to conduct an economic impact analysis, including gathering comments from the private sector, on their proposed rules. Following completion of an economic impact analysis, the Medical Examining Board must have an additional public hearing and public comment period on the whole of the rule.

Questions about the proposed rule and the economic impact comment period can be directed to [Ann Zenk](#) or WHA General Counsel [Matthew Stanford](#).



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Grant Awarded to Help Nursing Homes Meet Quality, Staffing and Safety Goals

WHA's Borgerding notes need for prompt action by nursing home industry

LeadingAge, the national organization representing nonprofit nursing homes and other aging services providers, has received a \$1.2 million grant aimed at helping nursing homes meet several quality, staffing and safety goals.

Awarded by the John A. Hartford Foundation, the grant will support activities such as identifying the most immediately actionable recommendations from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) report "[The National Imperative to Improve Nursing Home Quality: Honoring Our Commitment to Residents, Families, and Staff](#)," and devising strategies to bring them to fruition. NASEM's recommendations include strengthening the nursing home workforce, improving the sector's emergency preparedness, and increasing the transparency and accountability of nursing homes' finances, operations and ownership.

WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding noted the need for prompt action by the nursing home industry. "The pandemic underscored the interconnectedness between acute and post-acute care," said Borgerding. "Acute care providers and their patients need to have confidence that the post-acute care sector is a functioning part of the care continuum, which they say they are. We have seen that when that sector falters, hospital discharges are delayed, which, in turn, can delay access to crucial acute and post-acute care services for patients who need hospital care."

Rep. Tony Kurtz Recognizes Hospitals and Health Systems

Wisconsin hospitals and their workforce are heroes to Kurtz

At a dinner with WHA Southern Region leaders on June 8, Reedsburg Area Medical Center President and CEO Bob Van Meeteren introduced guest of honor state rep. Tony Kurtz as “a very strong advocate for Wisconsin’s hospitals.”

In turn, during his remarks, Kurtz recognized and expressed appreciation to hospitals and health systems and their workforce for their heroic efforts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health care leaders in attendance were appreciative of the recognition provided by Kurtz, and also for his partnership in identifying solutions to payer practices that add an additional burden for hospitals and their staff.



Rep. Tony Kurtz addresses attendees at WHA's Southern Region dinner on June 8, 2022.



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Flex Grant Funding Available to EMS Providers

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is inviting requests for applications for \$12 million in EMS Flex Grant funding. This investment comes from the American Rescue Plan Act–Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

“Wisconsin’s emergency medical services responders are among the first on the scene during our darkest hours—from a heart attack to a house fire—providing consistent, high-quality services when we need them most,” said Gov. Evers in a press release. “For too long, local communities have been doing more with less, especially in our rural communities who’ve had to cut critical public safety services due to lack of resources. These investments will help support EMS and health care access across our state by providing EMS providers the support they need to be there when folks need them.”

According to a DHS press release, flex grant funding is available for reasonable operating expenses for EMS, including, but not limited to:

- Medical and personal protective equipment/protective supplies
- Emergency operations including training required to maintain licensure or upgrade service level
- Response equipment including training required to operate the equipment
- Emergency response vehicles
- Emergency medical devices/trauma stabilization/pediatric and neonatal transport equipment
- Staff recruitment and retention

All EMS services licensed in the state of Wisconsin are eligible to request this funding. Applications are due before 4 p.m. on Monday, July 11, 2022. Grant awards are expected to be announced in August. Learn more and apply [here](#).



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Federal Grants Available for Language Services, Crisis Response

The following federal grants publicized by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services are available to health care providers in Wisconsin.

Promoting Equitable Access to Language Services in Health and Human Services

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health will provide funding to implement effective policies, programs, and processes to increase the use of prevention services through enhanced language access resources for individuals with limited English proficiency. Eligible applicants include public and private nonprofit entities. Up to eight, one-year grants of \$300,000 to \$375,000 will be awarded. Applications are due by 5 p.m. Wisconsin time July 15, 2022. [Learn more.](#)

Cooperative Agreements for Innovative Community Crisis Response Partnerships

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration will provide funding to create or enhance existing mobile crisis response teams to divert adults, children and youth experiencing mental health crises from law enforcement in high-need communities. A high-need community is one where mobile crisis services are absent or inconsistent, where most mental health crises are responded to by first responders and/or where first responders are not adequately trained or equipped to diffuse mental health crises. This includes increasing access to licensed/credentialed professionals in rural and remote communities. Eligible applicants include public or private nonprofit entities. Up to 12 grants of \$750,000 per year for up to four years will be awarded. Applications are due by July 25, 2022. [Learn more.](#)



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WHA Resource Spotlight: Free Member Benefit—Post or View Health Care Vacancies Online

Web-based tool helps members fill positions

WHA members can post job openings and search vacancies in a variety of health care careers on the WHA website. This web-based tool has been offered as a member service since 2004 and is available [here](#).

Take advantage of these great benefits:

- Post open positions at your hospital or health system—it's quick and easy.
- All positions are posted for one month and can be resubmitted if unfilled during that timeframe.
- It's a free benefit for WHA members and their staff.
- The postings appear on the WHA website—which is widely accessed by large numbers of interested parties.

Questions about posting a job can be directed to [WHA Communications](#).