

Miner's Hospital Board

Mission and philosophy

The Wyoming Miners' Hospital Board was established by the state legislature in March of 2001 for the sole purpose of establishing state-wide health care programs for miners. These programs are to address health problems related to pulmonary, cardiac, hearing or muscular-skeletal conditions determined through a state funded study to occur in miners at a disproportionately higher rate than in the general population. That same study also recognized that there were gaps in the current treatment and funding for treatment of these illnesses in the current health care system.

Results of outcomes

Hearing Aid Subsidy

This program began in July of 2003. Given that hearing loss is quite common among miners and also that hearing aids are not covered by most commercial insurance or worker's comp, the board offers a \$1,000 subsidy toward the purchase of a hearing aid (s) for miners diagnosed with hearing loss, regardless of the cause. A contract with a TPA (Third Party Administrator) was put out to bid and awarded to Ontrak Benefits of Colorado. Now in its second year of operation, this program served 382 miners this last year (839 for two years). The Board spent \$338,233 on hearing aids for this last year. This program shows only a slight decrease in demand. In addition to the \$1,000 hearing aid purchasing subsidy, the board also sought to reduce further the out of pocket expenses miners would have to pay for their hearing aids, by developing a PPO (Preferred Provider Organization). The PPO consists of both audiologists and hearing aid specialists who contractually agree to sell hearing aids at a discount in exchange for being listed as a recommended vendor. To date seven providers have signed up. In area they cover most of the state and in particular in locations where miners either work or reside. As in any PPO, vendors participate because they expect sales volume increases to more than offset the discounts offered.

Mobile Health Screening Vans

The board launched this health and wellness screening program in November of 2003 as a very efficient and less costly way to aid in miners' health improvement. The board contracted with Campbell County Memorial Hospital and Most Healthcare Systems to use their mobile testing vehicles to provide health screening tests at locations populated by active or retired miners throughout Wyoming. The Campbell County vans cover the Powder River Basin area and the MOST trailer visits

General information

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Agency contact

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Year established

2001

Statutory references

Sec.-30-6-101, 30-6-102, 30-6-103

Number of authorized personnel

Executive Director (position filled) and assistant position (not filled)

Organizational structure

Nine board members: Six from Sweetwater County, four of whom are selected from the Board of the Memorial Hospital of Sweetwater County by the County Commissioners and two, representing miners, selected by the Governor. Three from Campbell County, one of whom is selected from the Board of Campbell County Memorial Hospital by the County Commissioners, and two, again representing miners, by the Governor. The Executive Director position reports to the Board

Clients served

Active and retired miners of Wyoming who are residents of the state and have worked at one of the mines in the State (coal, trona, bentonite, uranium, sand & gravel, etc.).

Budget information

Beginning Appropriations\$2.5 million
(Funds come from interest on the balance of the miner's hospital account and miner's hospital income account in the permanent land fund)
Total Expenses\$1.3 million

Agency to which board reports

The board reports to the Governor and the Joint Appropriations Committee.

Number of meeting

The board is required by statute to meet two times a year, but in reality met four times this year. Some meetings are usually in person at a designated centralized location. But this year all the meetings were via the State's teleconference system with Rock Springs, Gillette and Laramie connections.

the remainder of the state. Tests offered include: CBC, u/a, blood chemistry, x- ray, EKG, pulmonary, vision, hearing, blood pressure, body fat analysis, height, weight, stool analysis and wellness profile. These tests are offered free to active or retired miners. For this fiscal year, 3200 miners have been tested. The vans have traveled to Rock Springs, Gillette, Douglas, Lovell, Kemmerer, Wright, Newcastle, Riverton, Greybull, Casper, Cheyenne, Rawlins and Green River. Upon completion of each twelve months of testing, the cycle with the same locations is repeated. Other towns may wish to be visited. That has been an operating invitation from the start. Local interest and population of miners determine where the vans stop. This program continues to grow as repeat visits occur and word of mouth spreads its success. For the reporting period, the board spent \$461,000 on this program.

Miners' Medical Assistance Benefit

A major underlying principle in all the programs the board has sponsored is that they have an immediate and direct impact on miners' health. The mobile wellness testing and the hearing aid purchase subsidy more than aptly meet this criterion. In line with that, the board has set out to develop a subsidy program that will pay up to \$1,000 toward the cost of health care delivered to miners by a healthcare provider for conditions related to pulmonary, hearing, heart and muscular skeletal. This subsidy will be a payer of last resort type, after all other insurance (if such exist) kicks in. If a miner lacks health insurance, this benefit will be available immediately. Miners with health insurance will be eligible for this benefit only after they have paid \$1,500 out of pocket for health expenses. Family members are not included as beneficiaries. The board has labored long and with intense effort on this program. The exact nature has been defined with the help of the board attorney from the Attorney General's Office. Through a lengthy bidding process, Mountain States Administration Company, was selected as TPA to administer this program. This program began in earnest in January of 2005. To date about twenty-seven claims have been filed using this system. The board is continuing to work diligently in promulgating this program.. The board is also considering adding prescription drugs to this program.

Miners' Health Program Registration Process

In addition to the health programs already mentioned, the board has conducted a concurrent registration program for miners. The purpose is to build up over time a data base of registered miners. These miners can then be notified directly of future board programs or sample surveyed for input on current or future programs. At the onset of offering programs, one major deficiency has been lack of specific data concerning demographic information such as age, sex, specific mining industry, location, active or inactive, etc. To build a data base for

future programs such information is needed. The registration base now numbers over 1400. The board has chosen to add a membership card program to this registration process, whereby each miner who registers will receive a plastic card indicating he or she is already registered and eligible for further board programs.

Strategic plan changes

The board's original strategic plan was drafted with the help of BBC, the consulting firm the state initially hired and whose in depth study led to the formation of the board. The programs listed above began to be developed and implemented either immediately prior to or after the start of calendar year 2004.

Hearing Aid Purchase Subsidy

Continue to promote this program to miners both active and retired lest they think it was a one time program. Funds have been budgeted to accomplish this. Work with the Covenant Insurance Group, Inc. to increase provider membership in the PPO for better prices for miners. Monitor PPO members compliance with their membership contracts. Be responsive to all input from annual phone surveys of miners served. Be in constant contact with providers as to their comments on the program and potential for improvement.

Mobile Wellness Testing

Work with both Campbell County Memorial Hospital and MOST Healthcare Systems, Inc. and mining companies' management to increase participation of miners in this program. Tighten scheduling in all locations to maximize the charge master and more efficient use of testing personnel. Explore new potential sites for testing and new tests. Continue to perform exit interviews of miners tested to improve program.

Miners' Medical Assistance Benefit

Continue to market and promote this program so miners become aware of the extent of its coverage and make use of it. Explore potential expansion of coverage. Conduct miner satisfaction surveys as program progresses.

Miners' Program Registration Process

Work with Ontrak Benefits to develop data base of social and demographic information on miners who register alone or through participation in one of the board's current programs.