

2009 Colorado Legislative Summary

During the 2009 Colorado General Assembly, the Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) was actively involved with numerous pieces of legislation. We appreciate all of you who helped with the successes achieved during this session and look forward to even greater success next year. Listed below are some of the key rural health bills that passed during the session:

HB09-1111 – Health Resources for Underserved Areas

This bill establishes in statute the Primary Care Office (PCO), which is in charge of many programs essential to rural healthcare services. The PCO also helps with provider recruitment and retention efforts and will oversee the state health professions loan repayment program. This bill was a top priority for CRHC this session and we applaud the General Assembly for passing such an important piece of legislation specifically focused on healthcare services in rural and underserved areas.

HB09-1119 – Rural Substance Abuse Grant Program

HB09-1119 creates the Rural Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment Program within the Department of Human Services. This Program will consist of two separate projects: the Rural Youth Alcohol & Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment Project, which will target youth between the ages of 8 and 17 years of age, and the Rural Detoxification Project for adults. Rural counties with populations of less than 30,000 people will be eligible for these grant dollars. The Program is not expected to begin until January 2010 and will hopefully provide much needed treatment and prevention services to rural communities.

SB09-002 – Increase Motor Vehicle Registration Fee for EMTS

This piece of legislation increases the motor vehicle registration fee, which funds emergency medical and trauma services, from \$1 dollar to \$2. The \$1 fee had not been increased since 1989. This new funding will help strengthen EMTS in rural areas of our state.

HB09-1293 – Colorado Healthcare Affordability Act

This bill has already been signed into law, and will assess a fee on hospitals, which in turn will be matched by federal dollars to be redistributed to hospitals to help increase Medicaid reimbursement rates. The fee is estimated to help insure over 100,000 Coloradans and generate over \$1.2 billion dollars.

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Colorado Budget

The 2009 General Assembly had to cut approximately \$500 million dollars between both FY08-09 and FY09-10. Healthcare services were not spared. A 2% Medicaid provider reimbursement cut for most types of providers will begin on July 1, 2009.

In addition, \$7.4 million was cut from the Amendment 35 Primary Care Fund, which supports safety net clinics and providers. In particular, some of our CRHC affiliated safety net clinics such as Basin Clinic in Naturita and Olathe Medical Center will lose over \$1 million in funding.

Also, tobacco cessation programs and cancer cardiovascular & pulmonary disease wellness and screening programs took a collective \$20 million dollar cut.

While these numbers may seem bleak, these cuts are not as drastic as originally proposed and we applaud the General Assembly for doing the best its members could to spare healthcare services during these tough economic times.