



Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee

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61th Montana Legislature

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CONTINUES HEALTH CARE STUDY

HELENA -- A legislative committee hopes to learn more next week about how proposed federal health care reforms may affect budgets and programs in Montana.

The Children, Families, Health, and Human Services committee has scheduled several presentations related to federal reforms as it continues a study of health care issues that was requested by the 2009 Legislature through passage of Senate Joint Resolution 35. Members also will hear about developments in the state's publicly funded mental health programs.

As part of its health care study, the committee will:

- hear about efforts underway in Montana to allow health care providers to share computerized patient records;
- learn more about proposed health insurance exchanges, which would serve as an electronic marketplace where some people could compare and buy insurance policies; and
- hear from the health policy director of the National Conference of State Legislatures about recent actions in Congress.

Joy Johnson Wilson of NCSL will discuss, via phone, the potential effects of federal changes on the states. For example, federal proposals would allow more people to qualify for Medicaid. States would have to pay a portion of the costs to expand the program.

The committee also will follow up on a mental health study conducted for the Legislature in 2008. State agency officials will discuss which of the study's recommendations they think should be pursued in the future. Department of Public Health and Human Services officials also will provide status reports on new mental health programs approved by the 2009 Legislature.

The committee will meet at 8 am. on Nov. 16 in Room 137 of the state Capitol. An agenda and meeting materials are available on the committee's Web site, www.leg.mt.gov/cfhhs. The meeting will be audio- and videocast live over the Internet at www.leg.mt.gov and televised over TVMT, the state public affairs network. To find the TVMT channel in your area, visit www.leg.mt.gov/tvmt.

Rep. Diane Sands, D-Missoula, chairs the committee. Senate members are Sens. Roy Brown, R-Billings; Christine Kaufmann, D-Helena; Rick Laible, R-Darby; and Trudi Schmidt, D-Great Falls. Other House members are Mary Caferro, D-Helena; Gary MacLaren, R-Victor; Penny Morgan, R-Billings; and Diane Sands, D-Missoula.

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