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Today's News Wednesday, May 11, 2011

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NYS Long-Term Care Costs

Home care and assisted-living costs rose at a significantly faster pace in New York than nationwide, according to Genworth Financial's 2011 Cost of Care survey, conducted during the first quarter. The median hourly rate to receive home care is \$21 an hour in New York for home health aide services, compared with \$19 nationally. The cost for home care rose 3.6% annually over the past six years in New York, but only 1.4% nationally during that period. For assisted living, the national median annual cost is \$39,135, an increase of 6% annually over the past six years; in New York, the median annual cost of assisted-living care is \$43,920, while costs rose 6.8% over six years. The median annual rate in New York for a private nursing home room is \$119,355 per year, compared with the national rate of \$77,745. The nursing home cost rose 3.1% a year over the past six years, compared to an increase nationally of 4.4%. For a regional breakdown of long-term care costs in New York state, see www.genworth.com.

Insurance Exchange Forums

The state is holding five public forums on exchanges, starting May 16. The May 18 forum is in Manhattan at Baruch College's Vertical Campus Conference Center from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; it is being webcast. For information on the forums, go to www.healthcarereform.ny.gov.

Women's Health

An estimated 27 million women went without insurance coverage in 2010, according to a report released today by the Commonwealth Fund in Manhattan. The individual and small-group insurance markets have been especially hostile zones for women seeking health insurance, said the report, as health plans worried about underwriting risk charged women and female-dominated businesses higher premiums on the basis of gender. Women working for small firms were the most likely to be uninsured. Nationally, women who seek coverage in the individual insurance market face additional hurdles, because few plans offer maternity coverage. In states that are not community rated, insurers charge more for young women than men of the same age. But the federal health reform law will expand coverage to nearly all uninsured women and will make insurance more affordable for millions of women through premium subsidies beginning in 2014, said the report, which is at www.commonwealthfund.org.

NY needs insurance exchange bill ASAP

With only 16 session days left until the New York state legislative session ends on June 20, there is a growing concern that the state will not pass enabling legislation for a health insurance exchange soon enough to tap millions of dollars in federal aid.

Under the federal Affordable Care Act, New York can apply for a five-year grant to create an exchange, but only if it has passed the key state legislation. With time running out, health advocates are concerned that Albany isn't moving quickly enough. "We should be getting that money," said one advocate. "The House Republicans would like to claw that money back, and New York should apply for it before the Republicans take it away."

Members of the Health Care for All New York coalition and other groups are pressing lawmakers to draft a bill and pass it by June 20. At a media event scheduled for today, they plan to publicize an open letter signed by more than 75 groups to Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Sen. Dean Skelos and Speaker Sheldon Silver urging them to pass a bill.

Setting up the exchange will be expensive, which is why advocates want New York to be able to access the federal grant money. According to an April 20 state document on planning the exchange, New York anticipates spending at least \$52.7 million on planning the exchange between fiscal years 2011 and 2014. The state received a \$27.4 million federal Early Innovator Grant award and anticipates receipt of at least another \$11.7 million through enhanced federal Medicaid matching funds.

At A Glance

WHO'S NEWS: Jeffrey Alan Hovden joined the New York office of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati as a partner. An intellectual property litigator specializing in patent litigation in the pharmaceutical industry, Mr. Hovden had been a partner at Katten Muchin Rosenman.

EXTRA: The compensation series continues.

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