Regional Update from HHS Regional Director Susan Johnson Region 10 - Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington



Dear Colleagues:

This month we have been celebrating the third anniversary of the enactment of the Affordable Care Act. The benefits of the Affordable Care Act have already been far-reaching, and this is just the beginning. This law is giving Americans more security by increasing accountability for insurance companies, providing more control and choice for consumers, and helping more families achieve peace of mind that prevention buys with affordable health insurance.

Today, tens of millions of people in our region are already seeing some of the early benefits of the law including:

- Over 3 million people with private insurance now have access to preventive services without paying a dollar out of pocket.
- 114,000 Medicare beneficiaries with the highest prescription drug costs have saved an average of \$706 on their prescription drugs.
- 4.5 million people with private insurance no longer have to fear their benefits disappearing when they need them most because insurers can no longer put lifetime caps on the amount of care for which they pay.
- 105,000 young adults through age 26 have been able to remain covered on their parents plans.

These are just a few examples of what has been accomplished already, and over the next year, millions more will benefit as the law expands access to affordable health insurance. Millions more Americans will gain access to quality affordable health coverage when new Health Insurance Marketplaces open for enrollment on October 1, 2013 in every state, giving individuals and families a simple, convenient way to find coverage that fits their budget. Small business owners will also be able to buy in the Marketplace and will be able to pool together to have purchasing power similar to large businesses.

<u>Click here</u> to learn more about how much has already been accomplished in your state in the three years since the Affordable Care Act was signed into law.

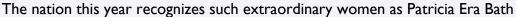
I want to thank all of you for everything you have done to help implement the Affordable Care Act, whether it's providing your input as a stakeholder, working to establish a Marketplace in your state, or educating people in your community about the coverage that is coming. But we still have a lot to do over the next year – we need to keep building on this progress to give Americans the health care system they deserve.

Regards, Susan

Recent HHS Events & Announcements

Women's History Month

March was Women's History Month, and this year's theme was "Women Inspiring Innovation Through Imagination: Celebrating Women in Science." This is especially fitting as we work to implement the Affordable Care Act and transform our health care system. So many extraordinary women have made major scientific breakthroughs that have saved countless lives.







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(1942), whose invention of the Laserphaco Probe was an important milestone in the advent of laser cataract surgery; Rita R. Colwell (1934), the first woman director of the National Science Foundation; Susan A. Gerbi (1944), a molecular cell biologist whose research has potential significance in understanding the role of hormones in certain cancers; and Flossie Wong-Staal (1946), a virologist and molecular biologist whose work made it possible to develop HIV tests.

The success of women is critical to our families, communities, and nation. Preventive services save lives now because of scientific discoveries that have been achieved. It is because of strong women throughout history that women today have increased opportunities to fulfill their potential and are on a path towards full equality. As we move forward, we need to always remember the women who have come before us on this path so that we can work toward a better future for women everywhere.

<u>Click here</u> to read Secretary Sebelius' statement on Women's History Month.



Speaking at the Bainbridge Island Chamber of Commerce March Breakfast about the progress being made on implementing the Affordable Care Act and what it means for both individuals and businesses. *Pictured: Rex Oliver, President and CEO of the Bainbridge Island Chamber of Commerce; Susan Johnson; Carolyn Frame, Branch Manager of Guild Mortgage Company on Bainbridge Island*

Working For Improved Health in Eastern Washington

I recently had the opportunity to travel to Spokane in Eastern Washington to see first hand some of the great progress underway to improve health and increase access to health care.

On the Spokane Reservation at the Wellpinit Middle and High School, I enjoyed food from the school's "scratch cooking" program funded by the Empire Health Foundation (EHF). EHF is the largest private health foundation in the region, which gives them a unique opportunity to build a philanthropic organization from the ground up, design and implement a strategic vision for impact, and establish the Foundation as a catalyst and convener in the region.



Enjoying the "scratch cooking" lunch. Pictured: Verna Kratzberg, school lunch teacher; Sarah Lyman, Senior Program Associate at Empire Health Foundation; Tim Ames, Superintendent at Wellpinit School District; Susan Johnson; Vicki LeBret, Wellpinit School District; Celia Stearns and Jennifer Andrews, school lunch teachers; and Kristen West, Vice President of Empire Health Foundation and founder of the program.

I also had the opportunity to meet with a powerful coalition that is working to promote the health of the residents in Eastern Washington—the Eastern WA Regional Health Improvement Collaborative (RHIC). Their triple aim is to work towards better health and wellness for the population, better care for individuals through improved coordination, integration, and collaboration, and reduced costs to individuals, families, employers, communities, and governments. Partners in this group are newly dedicated to achieving their goals. It was energizing to be with them.



Susan Johnson with members of the Regional Health Improvement Collaborative and the Empire Health Foundation. Pictured: Antony Chiang, Sarah Bates, Courtney Shirk, Anne Whigham, Sharon Fairchild, Anne Cowles, Darin Neven, Craig Diaz, Kathy Thamm, Deanna Davis, Torney Smith, Brian Benzel, Toni Lodge, Deb Harper, Gary Stokes, Susan Johnson, Toni Cooley, Sue Lani Madsen, Kristen West, Garman Lutz, Douglas Burt, Matt Layton, Keith Baldwin, Brian Myers, Jeff Klein, Nick Beamer

I also spoke at a town hall forum hosted by Spokane Public Radio. The event focused on getting information out to constituents about what the Affordable Care Act means for them and providing an opportunity for questions. It was a packed house of 300 people for the 2 hour event.



Spokane Public Radio Health Forum. Panelists: Jeff B. Collins, M.D., Chief Medical Officer at Providence Health Care; Susan Johnson; William Lockwood, M.D., Medical Director at Community Health Association of Spokane; Michael Marchand, Director of Communications at the Washington Health Benefit Marketplace; Stephanie Marquis, Communications Manager at the Office of the Washington State Insurance Commissioner; Madeline Otto, Director of Federal Government Relations at Group Health Cooperative; Moderator Doug Nadvornick, WSU-Spokane. Photo courtesy of Spokane Public Radio.

<u>Click here</u> for more information on the Spokane Public Radio Health Forum including future broadcast times of this event.



With Spokane Mayor, David Condon having discussed health and social services in Spokane.

Consumer Protections

March 4th was Consumer Protection week, which makes this the perfect time to talk about some of the new rights and protections Americans have under the Affordable Care Act.

Improved access to health coverage is coming. Beginning October 1, 2013, millions of people will be able to shop for health insurance and easily compare plans through the Health Insurance Marketplace that is established in their state. Such increased access to coverage is a major accomplishment in itself, but what makes this even more significant is that the health care law prohibits some of the worst practices of the insurance industry that have kept affordable and quality coverage out of reach for millions of Americans when they needed it most.

In the past, insurance companies could deny you coverage or charge higher premiums because you were sick or had a pre-existing condition. Starting in 2014, the law makes these practices illegal. Insurers are also prohibited from charging you more because of your gender or occupation.

One of the other egregious practices that is already illegal is canceling coverage because you made an honest mistake on your application.

Additionally, under the new health care law insurance companies must provide consumers greater value by spending generally 80 percent of premium dollars on health care and quality improvements instead of overhead, executive salaries, or marketing. If they don't, they must provide consumers a rebate or reduce premiums. This year alone, 66,363 Region 10 residents with private insurance coverage will benefit from \$7,654,629 in rebates because of this new rule.

These consumer protections and others included in the Affordable Care Act mean that more Americans than ever before will have access to quality health insurance they can afford.

<u>Click here</u> to learn more about the new consumer protections under the Affordable Care Act.

Grant Opportunities and Available Resources

For HHS funding resources, please visit the <u>HHS Grants/Funding site</u> or <u>FYI:</u> <u>Minority Resources...Money & More</u>, a newsletter published by the Office of Minority Health Resource Center.

Grants to Expand the Use of Technology-Assisted Care in Targeted Areas of Need (Tribal Eligible)—Funding is available to expand and/or enhance the capacity of substance abuse treatment providers to serve persons in treatment who have been underserved because of lack of access to treatment in their immediate community due to transportation concerns, an inadequate number of substance abuse treatment providers in their community, and/or financial constraints.. The deadline for submission is April 10, 2013. <u>View Full</u> <u>Announcement</u>

Understanding and Promoting Health Literacy (Tribal Eligible)-The

goal of this program announcement is to encourage methodological, intervention and dissemination research for understanding and promoting health literacy. Health literacy is defined as the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. The deadline for submission is May 7, 2013. <u>View Full Announcement</u>

Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems: Building Health Through Integration (Tribal Eligible)—The purpose of this grant program is to improve the healthy physical, social, and emotional development during infancy and early childhood; to eliminate disparities; and to increase access to needed early childhood services by engaging in systems development, integration activities and utilizing a collective impact approach to strengthen communities for families and young children and to improve the quality and availability of early childhood services at both the state and local levels. The deadline for submission is April 26, 2013. <u>View Full Announcement</u>

Cooperative Agreements for Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (Tribal Eligible)—The purpose of this program is to implement screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment services for adults in primary care and community health settings with substance misuse and substance use disorders (SUDs). This program is designed to expand/ enhance the state and tribal continuum of care for substance misuse services and reduce alcohol and drug consumption and its negative health impact; increase abstinence and reduce costly health care utilization; and promote sustainability of SBIRT services through the use of health information technology (HIT). The deadline for submission is April 29, 2013. <u>View Full</u> <u>Announcement.</u>

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