

WEST VIRGINIA
Department of



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Federal reports says WV now better prepared for health emergencies

State Health Officer Dr. Catherine C. Slemp agrees with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's new report that indicates West Virginia is more able to respond to a public health emergency than it was on Sept. 11, 2001.

"We began planning with emergency management, law enforcement, military agencies, and many others. This was broader than anything we'd done in the past. The number of folks we're working with has grown enormously. We've all had to learn about each others' jobs, and together move our response capabilities to a new level," Slemp said.

The CDC released its first annual report, "Public Health Preparedness: Mobilizing State by State," last week. In 2002, the CDC dramatically increased funding to states for preparedness work. States are now more prepared to respond to disasters affecting public health, such as ice storms and floods or an infectious disease outbreak, such as pandemic influenza.

Public health officials have always been responsible for protecting the public from infectious disease outbreaks, unsafe drinking water and unsanitary homes caused by floods. Terrorism and pandemic influenza add a new dimension to the work of public health employees.

To learn more about public health preparedness, go to www.wvdhhr.org/healthprep

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Statement of Martha Yeager Walker, Secretary
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources
In response to comments made in the West Virginia House of Delegates
March 7, 2008

- There is not a \$93 million surplus in Medicaid. We project a \$65 million deficit in 2011, a fact we have made abundantly clear in our budget hearings. Money is being set aside to meet that deficit.
- I know of no disconnect between the Department of Health and Human Resources and the legislature, particularly the House of Delegates. I have met personally with Chairman Don Perdue at least once during the session. We speak on the telephone. I spoke with him as recently as yesterday. Our staffs are in contact almost daily in person, by telephone and e-mail.
- I have also met with Delegate Sharon Spencer along with staff from the governor's office to make sure her questions were successfully answered.
- DHHR has been barraged with information requests from legislators. Because of the compressed nature of the 60-day legislative session, legislators may not receive these answers as quickly as they wish. DHHR staff resources and money are involved in filling these requests. While legislators may not have received the answers they wanted, they have consistently received credible information.

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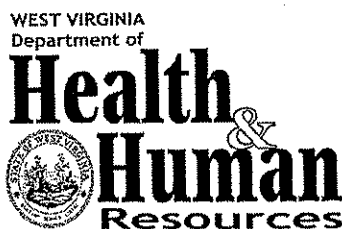
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Bureau for Children and Families becomes accredited

The Department of Health and Human Resources Bureau for Children and Families has been accredited by the Council on Accreditation.

DHHR joins COA's Community of Excellence that includes more than 1,000 private and public organizations and serves more than six million children, individuals and families in the United States and Canada. COA accreditation attests that an organization meets the highest national standards and is delivering the best quality services to the community it serves.

The COA is an international, independent, not-for-profit accrediting body of social and behavioral health care services. COA's mission "promotes best-practice standards; champions quality services for children, youth and families; and advocates for the value of accreditation."

The COA is endorsed, sponsored and supported by leading consumer and professional groups and by many regulatory bodies and managed care organizations. To learn more about the services provided by the Bureau for Children and Families go to: <http://www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/>.

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West Virginia Health Improvement Institute launched

A team of leaders from across the state have launched the West Virginia Health Improvement Institute in a collective effort to improve the health of West Virginia. The institute builds on many of the initiatives of Governor Joe Manchin to promote a healthy start for children and their families and a healthier workforce to power West Virginia's economic growth. The Institute also builds upon the initiative to transform the state's Medicaid program. Representatives of hospitals, physicians, community health centers and the state's three medical schools have joined with business, labor, consumers, insurance and managed care organizations, government agencies and other participants to address the unhealthy lifestyles and chronic conditions that afflict many residents, pushing health care costs higher.

The institute will initially focus on basic changes in the state's Medicaid program to better link patients and health care providers to medical homes that are proactive in promoting health and prevention. The institute will serve as an important communication forum to extend improvement efforts beyond Medicaid and help align and coordinate several ongoing health improvement initiatives throughout the state.

West Virginia received five transformation grant awards from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the federal agency that administers Medicare and Medicaid, totaling nearly \$14 million. The Medicaid transformation grants are part of the Federal Deficit Reduction Act

of 2005, allows states to apply innovative methods, such as enhanced medication management and electronic medical records, in administering their Medicaid programs. The health improvement institute is part of a broad initiative to improve the Medicaid system and ultimately healthcare systems statewide.

"The West Virginia Health Improvement Institute was born out of our efforts to improve our Medicaid program," said Martha Y. Walker, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources. "We have discovered that many of the things we need to accomplish to improve Medicaid for our members, the Public Employees Insurance Agency and Blue Cross are also seeking to accomplish. Most doctors, clinics and hospitals are also working on the same goals. The Governor has challenged us to improve the health care delivery system together, so everyone will benefit." Walker added. A goal of the institute is to seek common solutions to the complex problems of health care by involving a diverse and knowledgeable team of leaders from across the state.

Many West Virginians are keenly aware that the state leads the nation in unhealthy behaviors and the prevalence of chronic conditions. Improving the state's ranking in these categories is another goal of the Institute.