



Colorado Health Institute: 2009 in Review

Since its inception in 2002, the Colorado Health Institute (CHI) has provided reliable data and balanced policy analysis related to the health of the state's population as well as issues affecting access to health care by Colorado's most vulnerable residents. Today, in a time of large state budget cuts, rising health care costs and hundreds of thousands of Coloradans without health insurance, CHI's vision of a healthier Colorado through informed decisions is especially relevant. This summary highlights CHI's 2009 work in key policy areas and services to constituents.

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE SAFETY NET

As a symbol of its commitment to understanding the state's uninsured residents and the clinics and providers that serve them, CHI launched the Center for the Study of the Safety Net. The Center is CHI's first foray into organizing its work into a center of excellence concentrating on health care policy issues of high importance to Colorado decisionmakers. Jeff Bontrager was appointed program manager to lead the center.

In mid-2009, the center hosted CHI's second Colorado Health Care Safety Net Symposium, which drew approximately 200 attendees from across the state. It also released a number of new publications, including:

- **Primers** on the safety net as a whole as well as the mental health safety net
- A technical brief on how to understand the various estimates of how many Coloradans are **uninsured**
- The first **annual report** from CHI's Safety Net Indicators and Monitoring System (SNIMS), used to collect and track data about Colorado's health care safety net providers and the populations they serve annually
- **Issue brief** on children's health insurance including those with private insurance, those who are uninsured, those who are enrolled in public programs and children who are eligible but not enrolled in Medicaid and CHP.

As part of SNIMS, the Center also launched its third annual survey of Colorado's school-based health centers in partnership with the Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care. Additionally, safety net clinics were surveyed to monitor the effects of the current economic recession on Colorado's health care safety net providers.

Under a contract with the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing and using Census data and data from the 2008-09 Colorado Household Survey, CHI began developing estimates of the number of uninsured parents, children, childless adults and individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, on behalf of the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, CHI completed an analysis of women enrolled in the Child Health Plan Plus who recently gave birth to all other

pregnant women. Topics addressed included maternal demographic characteristics, maternal behaviors and utilization of health care during pregnancy and newborn birth outcomes.

COLORADO HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

Closely tied to CHI's safety net work was the Colorado Household Survey (COHS), begun in late 2008 and completed in early 2009, to collect information about the health insurance status of Coloradans. Funded by The Colorado Trust with a grant to the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), the survey of 10,000 households was administered by CHI. The Institute also received a grant from Caring for Colorado Foundation to analyze and disseminate its findings to help inform health policy decisionmaking.

The COHS provided for the first time real-time data about Coloradans on a regional basis, illustrating the diversity of Colorado's landscape and population and allowing for analyses of population differences based on where one lives in the state. CHI completed four policy briefs, which HCPF began releasing in December 2009. Topics included uninsured Coloradans, access to care, uninsured population by region and Coloradans affected by an individual mandate

COLORADO'S HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

Since 2005, CHI has been studying an issue that has become increasingly important in state and national health policy discussions—the health care workforce. As national and state reform move forward, a major challenge is how to ensure Coloradans have access to care in the future while dealing with an already well-documented shortage of health professionals.

In the past five years, CHI's Health Professions Database Project has surveyed 11 health professions as to education, training and practices issues. In 2009, an analysis of findings from the 2008 survey of 3,000 Colorado **registered nurses** was released, showing that the demographic characteristics of nurses in the state was out of line with Colorado's population in the gender and race/ethnicity distribution of the profession. This was particularly true with Hispanic nurses who comprised only 3 percent of the nursing workforce while 20 percent of Colorado's population was Hispanic.

With funding from The Colorado Trust, in June 2009 CHI surveyed Colorado's 1,362 **rural physicians** to gather information about themselves, their practices and the unique issues of working in rural areas. Like all of CHI's health professions survey, this one was developed in collaboration with health workforce leaders in the state, including the Colorado Medical Society, Rural Health Center, HRSA Region 8 office, COPIC Insurance, Area Health Education Centers and the Rural Track of the Medical School.

Also in the field in 2009 was a survey of Colorado's **non-rural dentists**, which sought to provide a more comprehensive picture of the state's dental workforce. The survey was mailed in July 2009 to a stratified random sample of 887 dentists in urban and suburban areas of the state. Findings from this survey and the 2008 survey of rural dentists are being analyzed to determine similarities and differences.

Also with funding from The Colorado Trust, CHI in 2009 conducted a study of promising primary care practices that use **non-physician primary care providers** exclusively or in an interdisciplinary team model of care. Clinics throughout Colorado were identified as models; the features of each clinic that hold promise for other Colorado communities will be highlighted in a forthcoming report.

In collaboration with the Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence, CHI collected data about Colorado's nursing education programs as part of the **2009 Nursing Faculty Study** funded by The Colorado Trust. The survey effort had a 100 percent response rate from nursing programs around the state and was conducted to identify and analyze key factors and issues affecting the supply of and demand for nursing faculty. This study is updating the 2004 report to help policymakers and others better understand the issues related to achieving an adequate supply of qualified nursing faculty in Colorado.

In addition, CHI's health care workforce team completed a number of related projects and publications in 2009, including:

- Summary of findings from three **oral health workforce** surveys administered by CHI between 2006 and 2008, prepared for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment;
- Findings from CHI's random, stratified survey of 2,500 **licensed practical nurses** in Colorado;
- Estimates for the Health Professions Workforce Policy Collaborative forecasting physician **supply and demand** in Colorado through 2025.
- Updated **inventory** of more than 100 organizations and 160 programs to better understand community-based and educational programs established to increase Colorado's health care workforce; and,
Overview of the **long-term care health workforce** in Colorado, prepared for the Colorado Alzheimer's Coordinating Council.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

With federal health care reform proposals and related debate front and center in the media and town hall meetings across Colorado and the nation in 2009, CHI took several steps to clarify the issues for policymakers and other constituents.

- A series of health policy roundtable discussions for legislators (see "Convenings and collaborations" below);
- Resources to assist readers in finding fact-based information on the various proposals and objective analyses that describe the elements of health reform without partisan or ideological spin; and
- *Healthwords*, a pocket-sized publication prepared to provide policymakers, state and local agency officials and other interested parties with a concise reference for understanding the myriad of terms and acronyms that are part of ongoing health care reform discussions.

CONVENINGS AND COLLABORATIONS

CHI continued its role of serving as a neutral convener of advisory councils and special task forces and committees appointed by the governor, the legislature or other entities. The institute's nonpartisan position enables it to facilitate difficult discussions among people with diverse viewpoints and to help them reach understanding. In 2009, CHI assisted the following appointed collaborative and councils.

Colorado Alzheimer's Coordinating Council

In 2009, CHI began facilitating bimonthly meetings of the Colorado Alzheimer's Coordinating Council (CACC), created by [Senate Bill 08-058](#). The council is charged with assessing the current and future impact of Alzheimer's disease in Colorado and formulating recommendations for a Colorado Alzheimer's State Plan that will address its impact on affected individuals, their families and caregivers, the state, and health care and other supportive services' resources. CHI provided research to the council and will draft the initial and final reports to the governor and General Assembly after the final meeting in July 2010.

Health Professions Workforce Policy Collaborative

CHI continued in 2009 to provide technical assistance and research for the Health Professions Workforce Policy Collaborative, sponsored by The Colorado Trust. This group of policy leaders, health care providers and educators is working to establish a strategic public policy framework for Colorado that will advance health professions workforce priorities.

Colorado Vaccine Advisory Council (VACC)

For several years, CHI has staffed the Vaccine Advisory Committee which in 2009 focused on three high priority areas: The Colorado Immunization Information System registry, implementation of a vaccine purchasing co-operative to be housed at Children's Hospital and development of a public awareness and education campaign for parents and health care providers.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Each year, CHI works closely with state agencies, foundations, coalitions and other entities to assist them in finding answers to health care questions or solutions to challenges they face. These special projects include a variety of issues and are provided in response to individual organizational or community needs.

Colorado Health Report Card

CHI completed the fourth annual Colorado Health Report Card for The Colorado Health Foundation,. The 2009 report card highlights current prevention activities underway in Colorado in addition to ranking the state's health by five life stages: Healthy Beginnings, Healthy Children, Healthy Adolescents, Healthy Adults and Healthy Aging.

Northwest Colorado profile

In response to a request from community stakeholders in the region, CHI prepared a demographic and health resource profile of residents in Moffat, Routt, Jackson, Grand and Rio Blanco counties. The report presents a comprehensive picture of the of the demographics of the population, the supply of health care resources and environmental factors that likely affect access and the health status of residents of the region.

Pediatric maps

To assist the Colorado Children's Healthcare Access Program, CHI completed a series of maps for the program to use in its strategic planning process to recruit more private physicians to serve Medicaid children.

Community reports

As part of The Colorado Health Foundation's 2009 conference, "Bringing Health Home," CHI provided participating communities with customized reports summarizing demographic and health care access data for community planning purposes.

Children's oral health

CHI was awarded a contract from the Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation to study differences in the utilization patterns and expenditures for dental care among children enrolled in Medicaid, Child Health Plan Plus and Delta Dental's commercial plans. The study will be completed in early 2010.

Birth-related neurological impairment program

Through a contract with United Cerebral Palsy of Colorado, CHI conducted an evidence-based review of the literature and examined the experience of other states to assess the feasibility of developing an alternative to medical malpractice for families in which a newborn experiences a birth-related injury that results in a permanent neurological impairment. The project will include development of an economic model for a compensation fund pilot.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

CHI provides information to its constituents through a variety of means. Besides facilitating and convening appointed task forces and committees, CHI sponsors roundtables, symposia and other events designed not only to inform but also to gather feedback and initiate discussion on major health policy issues.

Legislative roundtables

CHI exists to provide policymakers with the objective, accurate information they need to make sound decisions affecting health care in Colorado. Part of that role is helping them understand how national health-related decisions will affect Colorado. To that end, in 2009 CHI hosted four health care reform roundtables for legislators and their staffs about ways in which national health reform will likely affect Colorado. Sessions were provided on the basics of national health care reform, the impact of expanded insurance coverage on Colorado's safety net providers and the patients they serve, the adequacy of Colorado's health care workforce to serve a fully insured population, and long-term care and how it's factored into the national reform agenda.

New Web site

To better serve its constituents, CHI launched a new Web site with enhanced navigation features providing easy access to health care data at the county level as well as easier access to publications and presentations about key health care topics. Map and graph libraries allow readers to download a wide array of data for their own use in writing proposals or completing local needs assessments. Focus groups were held both before and after launch to ensure the Web site is meeting constituent needs.

GIS workshops

In 2009, CHI offered a series of workshops around the state to teach health care professionals, grant writers, policymakers and other interested constituents how to display community-level health or population data as maps rather than traditional graph or table formats. Workshops were held in Denver, Craig, Pueblo and Greeley and will be expanded in 2010 because of their popularity.

In addition, CHI:

- Responded to nearly 200 requests for information from advocacy organizations, state agencies, the legislature, governor's office, media, foundations, researchers, business, health care providers, local government agencies, health plans, universities, professional organizations and others.
- Was quoted or cited by more than 100 newspapers, professional journals, the legislature, professional and trade organizations, universities, foundations, state agencies, advocacy organizations, counties and regional coalitions, blogs, Web sites, books and others both within and outside Colorado.
- Made presentations to a variety of audiences at conferences and meetings on issues from Colorado's health care workforce and safety net to national and state health care reform and Colorado children's insurance status.
- Added or updated 153 data indicators on demographics, the health care workforce, the uninsured, access to care, health costs and financing, and the safety net.