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Bacon's

HEALTH CARE

Colorado inches higher in national health ratings

United Health Foundation and the American Public Health Association and Partnership for Prevention have ranked Colorado 16th among states with the healthiest population.

The state ranked 17th last year.

Colorado's strengths include high immunization rates, with an 8 percent increase during the past year; a low prevalence of obesity; and low rates of cancer and cardiovascular disease. Additionally, the number of smokers has decreased state-wide by 31 percent since 1991.

The report ranked Minnesota as the healthiest state in the nation for the fourth year in a row. Vermont was second, followed by New Hampshire, Hawaii and Connecticut. Louisiana was the least healthy state, with Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas completing the bottom five.

Colorado's placement in the mid teens was attributed to limited access to prenatal care and a high percentage of uninsured residents, 17 percent, an increase of 33 percent since 1990.

The study also revealed changes in health care in Colorado during the last year.

- Immunization rates increased from 77.1 percent to 83.4 percent.

- The percentage of children in poverty increased from 11.7 percent to 14.7 percent.

The cost of clinical care in Colorado is moderate compared to other states, according to the report, but the quality of care is higher.

America's Health Rankings combines 18 individual measures classified within four determinants of health into one comprehensive view of the health of all 50 states, both separately and collectively.

Health coverage information hotline launched

The Foundation for Health Coverage Education has expanded its toll-free help line, which provides access to information about public and private coverage to uninsured residents.

"Research shows that many Coloradans have access to programs, but they're either unaware of the programs or need help signing up," said Philip Leberer, founder of FHCE. "This service provides live counselors to help simplify the eligibility and enrollment process in order to help more people obtain the coverage they need."

The foundation examined the backgrounds of the 687,000 Coloradans without health insurance. The study revealed that 161,000 were eligible for public insurance programs but had not enrolled; 125,000 were temporarily uninsured because of transitions in employment; and that 221,000 people who earn \$50,000 or more annually and prefer to pay as they go, or think insurance is too costly.

The truly uninsured number, according to the foundation, is 180,000.

The help line (800-234-1317) is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week with people trained to screen for both public

and private insurance. Operators also can refer callers to state-sponsored programs and the appropriate health care coverage.

The Foundation for Health Coverage Education is a nonprofit organization based in San Jose, Calif. The organization was founded to help uninsured people who are eligible for programs, but not enrolled.



AMY
GILLENTINE

JCAHO asks for comments about patient safety

Health care professionals and patient advocates from around the world are being asked to comment about nine proposed solutions for improving patient safety.

The proposals were developed by the World Health Organization's Collaborating Center for Patient Safety.

The "Patient Safety Solutions" address the issues of look-alike, sound-alike medications; correct patient identification; hand-over communications; wrong site, wrong patient surgery; use of concentrated electrolyte solutions; medication reconciliation; catheter and tubing misconnections; needle reuse and injection safety; and hand hygiene.

The survey will be available online until Feb. 16 at www.jcipatientsafety.org/survey.

"With the growing knowledge that millions of patients are being harmed daily throughout the world as a consequence of preventable adverse events, the urgency could not be greater for patient safety solutions that will help practitioners and health care organizations avoid these tragic occurrences," said Dennis O'Leary, president, Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

"Creating patient safety solutions that will truly work across the international spectrum is no small challenge," said Karen Timmons, president and chief executive officer, Joint Commission International. "But we are working to ensure that the solutions, once finalized, will accommodate both cultural differences in the various world regions and the varying levels of development in countries around the world."

The World Health Organization designated the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and Joint Commission International as its collaborating center for patient safety in 2005. The Joint Commission International Center for Patient Safety is working with leaders around the world to identify health care safety needs and match the needs with known best practices and solutions.

The Patient Safety Solutions have been reviewed by an international panel of patient safety experts as well as regional advisory councils in Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region. Their comments have been integrated into the proposal.

To participate in the survey, learn more about the solutions or provide suggestions for future solutions development, visit www.jcipatientsafety.org/survey. Questions about the survey may be directed to Patti Zidlicky, project director, Joint Commission International Center for Patient Safety, at pzidlicky@jcaho.org.

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