

The high cost of low Medicaid reimbursement rates

Robin Dale is the president and CEO of Washington Health Care Association (whca.org), of which CHCC is a member. WHCA represents and advocates for more than 400 skilled nursing and assisted living centers in Washington state.

He recently wrote an opinion article about nursing home closures related to Medicaid reimbursement rates (how we get paid to do the work we do). The article was published in The Everett Herald. The commentary is shared below so you have insight into the challenges leaders in our industry are fighting to resolve. heraldnet.com/opinion/commentary-nursing-home-closures-a-threat-to-states-seniors/

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In recent years, people from across Washington state, including many right here in Snohomish County, have struggled to find available and safe assisted-living or nursing home care facilities for themselves or their loved ones.

And as our state's population continues to age, the shortage of long-term care options is only going to worsen unless something changes. We've reached crisis levels.



REFRESH!

No food or drinks are allowed at the nurses stations or on the med carts.

In the last two years alone, about a dozen facilities in the state have closed, totaling a loss of nearly 700 nursing home beds.

The reason behind the repeated closures of these facilities is simple: inadequate Medicaid reimbursement rates. The result of the state's low rates leaves our seniors at risk of going without the care they need or forcing them to relocate to facilities elsewhere in the state, often miles away from their family and friends.

Our state has one of the worst reported shortfalls in the nation between the cost of providing care and the rates at which Medicaid reimburses facilities for that care. In 2017, the most recent year for which the state Department of Social and Health Services' cost-report data is available, unreimbursed nursing home care costs averaged \$43.28 per day, per Medicaid resident. That low rate means that it actually costs the facilities more money to care for each patient on Medicaid than they receive in payment.

*But our Legislature can fix this. Our neighboring states have worked to address this issue over the last few years. Oregon's average daily Medicaid rate exceeds Washington's by \$120 per resident, per day, while Idaho's average daily Medicaid rate exceeds Washington's by \$45 per resident, per day. **Continue reading on Page 3.***



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RESOURCES FOR YOU

Have you noticed these flyers and yellow cards throughout the building? CHCC's compliance coordinator, Mary Faber-Wynstra, has arranged to have these two reference resources available for you.

The first is a white leaflet — Compliance Reminders for CHCC Team Members — which includes answers to many of the questions you may be asked by the DSHS survey team.

The second item is a little yellow card, which includes info on patient rights and abuse reporting.

These resources have been placed throughout CHCC. You'll find copies at the employee entrance, both staff break rooms, each nurses station, the Infinity Rehab office and the classroom.

Please take a few moments to review the information on the leaflet and the little yellow card. Questions? Contact Mary, Tonja Myers, or Heather Lewis.



REFRESH!
All information on any chemical used in the facility is kept in the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) notebook by the employee entrance.

KUDOS

Our piano players have a combined 156 years of volunteer service to CHCC. What an incredible group of ladies! (This picture shows just four of many.) Read more about our amazing volunteers at chcclynden.org/news.



ORDER UP!

Visitors and families alike can order food and beverage items from our new catering menu. Please keep this in mind for long-term care families. They can order a quiche breakfast for one, a full baked potato bar for a family gathering, or family style salads for a special lunch. Menus are located at the main reception desk and online at chcclynden.org/visitation.

Continued from Page 1. Washington state lawmakers cannot continue to fail our seniors, especially as our state's population ages. There are about 10,000 people in Washington nursing homes who rely on Medicaid funding on any given day. In 2017, the cost of caring for nursing home residents on Medicaid exceeded the Medicaid rate by more than \$145 million.

Recently, I've spoken with a provider who is worried that two of his company's four nursing homes are at risk of closure if our legislature doesn't raise Medicaid rates this year. Unless something changes, we can and should expect even more facilities to close.

The string of facility closures has created an air of uncertainty making it increasingly difficult to find people adequately suited and trained to care for patients. It has begun to hurt the quality of care in Washington's nursing homes as facilities have been forced to turn to expensive agencies to bridge staffing shortages rather than hiring dedicated full-time staff.

Washington's seniors and their families deserve better than this. Our Legislature must act now to raise Medicaid reimbursement rates. This problem will not fix itself; it will only get worse, leaving some of our state's most vulnerable people at risk. Contact your state lawmakers and let them know that you support investing in our seniors.

Update: Unfortunately, the Washington State Legislature passed a budget on April 29, 2019, that did not recognize the struggles of the long-term care industry. Long-term care leaders will continue to raise awareness and advocate for elders in our community.

Taking YOUR Pulse



ASK US ANYTHING!

Have a question about CHCC? Jot it down and drop this slip in a break room comment box. We'll share answers in the Q&A column in this newsletter.

RESULTS OF THE STAFF SURVEY

Question 7: What would you like to learn next/how can CHCC help you achieve your career/personal goals?

Answer summary: A number of you mentioned continuing education; however, some mentioned not personally having time to pursue that even if they wanted to. Who else can relate to feeling like there are not enough hours in each day?

- I am happy where I am now.
- I would like to build more self-confidence.
- I would like to learn more about the Music and Memories program. I want to be part of moving this towards a facility-wide program with training and materials accessible to all staff.
- I would love to get into nursing but just don't have the time for schooling right now.
- When would I have time to learn more? With family, job, church... My plate is FULL.
- I am happy. CHCC has allowed me to continually work my way up and I have enjoyed the pace of being moved up.
- I believe we could use more training on how to deal with dementia patients.
- I feel CHCC has supported my career goals.
- I would like to earn a MSW degree.
- I would like to focus more on developing my hobbies to see if there is potential for a career. CHCC cannot help me with this. This is something I'd do on my own.
- The ability to utilize Relias for ongoing education is effective.





LEADERSHIP TIP: Acceptance

Think about your coworkers. Would you say that they each feel accepted and welcome at CHCC regardless of their race, color, creed, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation or handicap?

Are you acting in a way that ensures each person you encounter at work feels welcome and not judged or discriminated against, or do you sometimes struggle with judgments and acceptance of differences?

If you help everyone who walks through the doors of CHCC feel welcome and accepted, thank you for helping create a culture of acceptance here!

If you struggle with acceptance on occasion, please consider these two tips:

- Keep in mind what it feels like when you know another person completely accepts you even though you may have differences.
- If you release judgments and simply let people be, they will be happier and you will be more at peace in your daily life. More acceptance = more peace. That's a good thing for all!

DATES TO REMEMBER: **May 13** is Leprechaun Day. Wear green! On **May 15** there will be a safety committee meeting at 2:35 p.m. in the conference room. Then, on **May 16**, there are mandatory NAC meetings at 7 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. Also on **May 16**, there is an employee relations meeting in the conference room at 1 p.m., and it's "Wear Purple for Peace" day.

REFRESH!
An emergency plan is in a red three-ring binder at each nurses station. Any staff person may access this information.

RESULTS OF THE STAFF SURVEY

Question 8: How can your manager better support you?

Answer summary: There were a number of requests for open communication and to pitch in during peak busy times.

- I feel very supported.
- I don't always feel respected as an equal by those in positions with more authority. Mutual respect with the understanding that we're all here to serve the residents would be nice.
- My manager is super.
- I feel great support from all management and supervisors. I feel they don't hesitate to teach and they are kind and respectful.
- Having someone available evenings/nights would be helpful.
- DNS and ADNS do a good job.
- By providing constant feedback.
- Don't make us work shifts we do not want to.
- My manager is doing a great job.
- Lend a hand when things are out of control.
- Check in with workers who are not new, too.
- Some have never said hello, some are amazing. I think feeling like they are approachable, and an open door, is important.
- I believe she does support me at the best of her abilities and I am really grateful for what she does for me.
- She is AMAZING! Great team player and always willing to pick up the extra slack to help the team. Couldn't ask for a better manager.