

# Miners' Hospital Board

## Mission and philosophy

The Wyoming Miners' Hospital Board was established by the State Legislature in March of 2001 for the sole purpose of establishing state-wide health care programs for miners. These programs are to address health problem related to pulmonary, cardiac, hearing or muscular-skeletal conditions determined through a state funded study to occur in miners at a disproportionately higher rate than in the general population. That same study also recognized that there were gaps in the current treatment and funding for treatment of these illnesses in the current health care system.

## Results of Outcomes:

### Hearing Aid Subsidy

This program began in July of 2003. Given that hearing loss is the most common affliction among miners and also that hearing aids are not covered by most commercial insurance or Worker's Comp., the Board offered a \$1,000 subsidy toward the purchase of a hearing aid (s) for miners diagnosed with hearing loss, regardless of the cause. A contract for a TPA (Third Party Administrator) was put out to bid and was awarded to Ontrak Benefits of Colorado. Through June 30, 2004 after one year of operation, the program has served over 350 miners in their procurement of hearing aids for an outlay of \$323, 880 from the fund. This program shows no indication of diminishing demand.

In addition to the \$1,000 Hearing Aid Purchasing Subsidy, the Board also sought to further reduce the out of pocket expenses miners would have to pay in their purchase of hearing aids by developing a PPO (Preferred Provider Organization). The PPO consists of both audiologists and hearing aid vendors who contractually agree to sell hearing aids at a discount in exchange for being listed as a recommended vendor. To date six (6) providers have signed up. In total they cover most of the State and in particular locations where miners either work or reside. As in any PPO, vendors participate because they expect sales to increase in excess of the discounts offered.

### Mobile Health Screening Vans

The Board launched this screening and early detection program in November of 2003 as a very efficient and less costly way to aid in miners' health improvement. The Board chose a mobile wellness program partnering with Campbell County Memorial Hospital and Most Healthcare Systems, Inc. to provide health screening tests at locations

#### General information:

Edward G. Leake, Executive Director

#### Agency contact

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#### Year established

2001

#### Statutory References

Sec. 30-6-101, 30-6-102, 30-6-103

#### Authorized personnel

Executive Director (filled) and assistant position (not filled)

#### Organizational structure

##### **Nine (9) board members:**

Six (6) from Sweetwater County, four of whom are selected from the Board of the Memorial Hospital of Sweetwater County by the County Commissioners and two, representing miners, are selected by the Governor.

Three (3) from Campbell County, one of whom is selected from the Board of Campbell County Memorial Hospital by the County Commissioners, and two, again representing miners, by the Governor.

The Executive Director reports to the Board

#### Clients served

Active and retired miners of Wyoming who are residents of the State and have worked at one of the mines in the State (coal, trona, bentonite, uranium, sand & gravel, etc.).

#### Budget information

(Expenditures for report period)

Beginning Appropriations .....\$998,804

(Funds come from interest on the balance of the miner's hospital account and miner's hospital income account in the permanent land fund)

Budget Revision .....256,700

(Revision requested because of uncertainty of number of miners who would utilize new programs)

**Total Appropriations..... \$1,255,504**

**Total Expenses ..... \$1,026, 170**

#### Agency to which board reports

The Board reports to the Governor and the Joint Appropriations Committee.

#### Meeting frequency

The Board meets six (6) times a year. Some meetings are in person at a designated locale, while other meetings are via the State's Teleconference System.

populated by active or retired miners throughout Wyoming.

The Campbell County Vans cover the Powder River Basin area and the MOST Trailer, the remainder of the State. Tests offered include: CBC, UA, Blood Chemistry, X-Ray, EKG, Pulmonary, Vision, Hearing, Blood Pressure, Body Fat Analysis, Height, Weight, Stool Analysis and Wellness Profile. These tests are offered free to active or retired miners. Through June, 2004 over 2600 miners have been tested. The vans have visited Rock Springs, Gillette, Douglas, Lovell, Kemmerer, Wright, Moorcroft, Riverton, Greybull and Casper. Other sites planned are Cheyenne, Rawlins and Green River. Upon completion of its first twelve months of testing, the cycle and locations will repeat. Other towns may wish to be visited. That has been an operating invitation from the start. Local interest determines where the vans stop. Any town in the state is eligible.

This program continues to grow as repeat visits occur and word of mouth spreads its success. For the reporting period, the Board spent \$450,000 on this program which started in the Powder River Basin in November and the remainder of the State in January.

## Miners' Medical Assistance Benefit

A major underlying principle in all the programs the Board has begun is that they have an immediate and direct impact on miners' health. The Mobile Wellness Testing and the Hearing Aid Purchase Subsidy more than aptly meet this criterion. In line with that, the Board has set out to develop a subsidy program that will pay up to \$1,000 toward the cost of health care delivered to a miner by a healthcare provider for conditions related to pulmonary, hearing, heart and muscular skeletal. This subsidy will be a payer of last resort type, after all other insurance (if such exist) kicks in. If a miner lacks health insurance, this benefit will be available immediately. Miners with health insurance will be eligible for this benefit only after they have paid \$1,500 out of pocket for health expenses. Family members are not included as beneficiaries.

The board has labored long and with intense debate on this program. The exact nature has been defined with the help of the board attorney from the Attorney General's Office. Through a lengthy bidding process, Mountain States Administration Company, a TPA, was selected to administer the program, scheduled to begin in September 2004.

## Miners' Health Program Registration Process

At the onset of offering programs, one major deficiency has been lack of specific data concerning demographic information such as age, sex, specific mining industry, location, active or inactive, etc. To build a data base for future programs such information is needed. The Board

has worked with an outside company OnTrak benefits in developing a standard registration form for all its programs and gathering that data in a centralized data bank. To further jump start this data gathering, the board has elected to have an insert of this registration form in a September edition of the Casper Star Tribune. This will allow the Board to contact eligible miners directly regarding new programs and schedules.

## Strategic plan changes

The board's strategic plan was drafted with the help of BBC, the consulting firm the State initially hired and whose in depth study led to the formation of the board. The programs listed above began to be developed and implemented either immediately prior to or after the start of calendar year 2004.

- 1. Health Insurance Plan Education.** Continue to have the Covenant Insurance Group, Inc. research the health insurance field and action on the Federal Level to keep miners' informed of available health insurance for those who retire early or are without health benefits. This information will be disseminated through brochures and open meetings.
- 2. Hearing Aid Purchase Subsidy**-Continue to promote this program to miner both active and retired lest they think it was a one time program. Funds have been budgeted to accomplish this. Work with the Covenant Insurance Group, Inc. to increase provider membership in the PPO for better prices for miners. Monitor PPO members compliance with their membership contracts.
- 3. Mobile Wellness Testing** -Work with both Campbell County Memorial Hospital and MOST Healthcare Systems, Inc. and mining companies' management to increase participation of miners in this program the second time around. Tighten scheduling in all locations to maximize the charge master and more efficiently use testing personnel. Explore new potential sites for testing.
- 4. Miners' Medical Assistance Benefit** - Implement this program. Promote so miners are aware of its content and make use of it. Readjust program parameters and budget request based on utilization.
- 5. Miners' Program Registration Process.** Work with Ontrak Benefits to develop data base of social and demographic information on miners who register alone or through participation in one of the board's current programs.