Top Stories

Air Ambulance Study Could Boost Legislation on Surprise Bills
In 2016, nationwide median charges for air ambulance services, which are used disproportionately in rural areas, were 4.1 to 9.5 times what Medicare paid for the same services. That's according to a new study from Johns Hopkins University researchers, which finds that the billing disparity for air ambulance services is much higher than for physicians or ground ambulance services. The findings could add fuel to national legislation in the works to clamp down on unexpected medical bills.

Rural Hospitals Hospitals Innovate to Meet Community Needs
The American Hospital Association blog reports on two rural hospitals innovating to meet the needs of their communities. In Baldwin, Wisconsin, Western Wisconsin Health is focusing on upstream interventions to help patients before they need more intensive services. And in Winona, Minnesota—near the Wisconsin border—Winona Health is experimenting with new payment models and partnering with bigger entities to maximize resources.

Northwoods Medical Clinic To Focus on Tick-Borne Illnesses
A new medical clinic in Woodruff, Wisconsin will seek to address patient concerns and advance scientific understanding around tick-borne illnesses. The Tick-Borne Illness Center of Excellence is scheduled to open this summer, and will be the first in the Midwest to combine clinical treatment for tick-borne illnesses with scientific research. According to the Centers for Disease and Control, in 2017, Wisconsin had 3,000 confirmed or probable cases of Lyme disease—the fourth highest in the nation.

More News

- A Wisconsin bill would provide three kinds of refundable tax credits to fire and emergency medical service volunteers. The bill currently sits in the Committee on Ways and Means.
- An initiative in Michigan is piloting medication-assisted treatment to treat substance abuse, primarily for those in hospitals and jails.
- In a move to address workforce shortages, UW-Madison may soon expand its physician assistant program to UW-Platteville.
- Two rural entrepreneurs are asking for input from rural folks on community and business challenges. Take the Survey of Rural Challenges.
- Governor Tony Evers has signed legislation to make it easier for patients to get needed prescription drugs without trying cheaper alternatives first, addressing an insurance process known as "step therapy.”

Grants & Funding Opportunities
- Grants for local education agencies to develop, enhance, or expand frameworks for improving school climate. Priority will be given to rural and tribal schools and projects that address opioid abuse and prevention. Deadline: July 22.

- The Wisconsin Dental Program offers funding to nonprofit organizations that are engaged in projects to improve access to oral health care. Deadline: July 31.

- Funding to support health-related programs that strengthen regional and rural communities in western Wisconsin. Deadline: August 9.


- Grants to include education and neighborhood improvement, economic development, youth development, community problem-solving, and more in some Wisconsin locations. Deadline: August 29.


The state of Wisconsin provides funding to public school districts for students to obtain recognized credentials in certain industries with workforce shortages, including some health professions.

A specialized program recently began for high school students to receive training in emergency medical services or firefighting. Schools will receive $1,000 for every student who receives an industry certification to become an EMR, EMT, Firefighter 1 or 2, or Fire Inspector. Students will also receive $500 upon their successful completion.

See our fact sheet for more information.

Events

- July 18: A webinar will highlight the Zero Suicide initiative, its precursor, and its impact in state and federal sectors. 11am.

- July 18: A webinar will focus on safer opioid prescribing for adults after surgery and trauma. Participants can receive free opioid CME credit. Noon.

- July 18-19: Two workshops in Wausau (July 18) and Rhinelander (July 19) will focus on building resilient families and communities by moving through trauma, adverse childhood experiences, and addiction.

- July 30: A webinar will outline an initiative to increase the number and competency of sexual assault nurse examiners in Indiana, with a focus on rural and underserved communities. 1pm.

- July 30: A webinar will outline how to build a strong, professional therapy service for your rural hospital. 2pm.

- Register for our Rural Hospital Finance Workshop on August 23 in Sauk City, with topics on: a CAH regulatory update, Medicare and Medicaid updates, 340B, co-location guidance, telehealth compliance and billing, and measuring CAH productivity.