

ADVOCACY FOR DIABETES CARE ASSURES COVERAGE FOR NEEDED SUPPLIES

Volunteer advocacy committee keeps the issue on the table and educates legislators

Public Health Problem

- Diabetes medications, patient education and test strips and meters to measure blood sugar levels are critical for the comprehensive diabetes management that prevents costly complications.
- The Diabetes Treatment and Management-Managed Care Act sponsored by Utah legislator, Howard Nielson, mandated coverage by state-regulated insurance plans for diabetes supplies and education but contained a sunset review provision.
- The sunset review clause required the insurance commissioner's office to evaluate the financial impact of the bill, measure changes in availability of coverage, and determine the extent to which care improved during the three-year period. A negative report would likely have eliminated the mandated coverage.

Program

- Concerned representatives from state organizations such as the American Diabetes Association, the Association of Diabetes Educators of Utah, and the Utah Dietetic Association formed a volunteer committee with the sole goal of ensuring the mandate was not eliminated at the end of three years, a strategy that proved to be very effective.
- The regional American Diabetes Association advocacy representative met frequently with the committee and formalized a process for supporting continued coverage.
- The Utah Diabetes Prevention and Control Program could not take a position on the bill but was able to provide accurate data to be used in the insurance commissioner's report.
- Committee members sought support from colleagues, friends and family and encouraged them to contact their district's legislators to educate them about the issue.
- Diabetes educators made their presence known in the legislative halls by offering blood sugar screenings to legislators. The diabetes community was kept informed through a listserv and there was a strong effort to ensure an advocate for every census tract.
- In a public forum, a Utah legislator provided guidance on communicating with representatives.
- The insurance commissioner's report on the three-year experience under this legislation indicated that the financial impact on insurance premiums was negligible while coverage of medical supplies and education improved for people with diabetes in the state.
- The estimated cost of the mandate was only an average of two cents per month per client in increased premiums, leading the volunteer advocacy committee to draft a position paper emphasizing the value to people with diabetes of the results described in the commissioner's report, titled *Our Two Cents' Worth*.

Impact

- Committee efforts along with the favorable insurance commissioner report led to rescinding of the sunset provision, and the bill remains in effect, benefiting insured state residents with diabetes and containing no threat of future sunset reviews.

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