



PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Interview:

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Conference “Takes Stock” of the New Direction of Health Reform in Wisconsin *Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, Secretary Dennis Smith and Administrator Brett Davis headline event*

Madison, WI –The 4th Annual HealthWatch Wisconsin Conference convenes policy-makers, health care advocates, patient navigators, and others from the public health workforce to learn about the new direction of health reform in Wisconsin. “Health Reform is a big question mark in Wisconsin,” stated Public Interest Attorney Bobby Peterson. “At a time of changing administration, changing priorities, and changing policies, we need information about how to best help Wisconsin families obtain and maintain health care coverage,” continued Peterson. Concerned stakeholders will gather in Madison to learn about emerging new policies and the latest strategies to help guide people to the health care and coverage they need and deserve.

The HealthWatch Wisconsin Conference is March 7 & 8 at the Best Western Inn on the Park in Madison. The event will begin at 1:00pm on Monday with keynote speaker Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin. Other speakers throughout the two-day event include Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary Dennis Smith and Access and Accountability Administrator Brett Davis. Senators Pam Galloway, Jon Erpenbach (by phone) and Kathleen Vinehout (by phone) will join Rep. Donna Seidel to round out the annual “Legislative Panel.” “Our conference participants will communicate with their elected officials and policy makers and learn the implications of health reform, the budget, and budget repair for Wisconsin, and how each will impact our vital programs like BadgerCare Plus and Medicaid Programs,” says Peterson.

Awards: The event will include an awards luncheon honoring awardees for outstanding service to the health of the public in Wisconsin. “We honor and celebrate those who work hard to make life better through information and advocacy for many people in Wisconsin,” said Peterson. The recipients of the 2010 HealthWatch Wisconsin Awards include:

Elected Official of the Year: Rep. Sandy Pasch (D-Whitefish Bay)

Advocate of the Year: Pam Rabe, *Managed Care Ombudsman*

Outstanding Outreach Effort of the Year: Gwen Alzheimer, *Program Manager City of Milwaukee Health Department Community Healthcare Access Program*

Outstanding Media: Kurt Chandler, *Milwaukee Magazine*

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Public Hearing: HealthWatch Wisconsin will sponsor Public Hearings on the impact of BadgerCare and Medicaid programs on the people of Wisconsin. The hearings are free and open to the public, running from 2:00 to 4:00pm March 7 & 8, also at the Inn on the Park in Madison. HealthWatch Wisconsin staff will record participant's testimony and share these important perspectives with Wisconsin's elected officials. After the hearing concluded at 4:00 pm, interested participants will rally at the capitol to raise awareness to the vital needs of Wisconsin's BadgerCare and Medicaid enrollees.

If You Go:

What: 4th Annual HealthWatch Wisconsin Conference

Date: Monday, March 7, 2011, 1:00pm-4:00pm; Tuesday, March 8, 2011, 8:30am-4:00pm

Place: Best Western Inn on the Park (22 S. Carroll St., Madison)

To Register: There is a cost to attend the full conference, but the public hearings are free and open to the public. Space is limited, but there is an opportunity to register at the door.

"With a ground-level view of the access problems people confront, our education and advocacy strategies provide the best opportunity to learn how to help families obtain and maintain a connection to health care coverage and services," says Peterson.

HealthWatch Wisconsin is a project of ABC for Health, Inc. ABC is a Wisconsin-based, nonprofit, public interest law firm dedicated to linking children and families, particularly those with special health care needs, to health care benefits and services. ABC for Health's mission is to provide information, advocacy tools, legal services, and expert support needed to obtain, maintain, and finance health care coverage and services.

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