

“Rural Healthcare”
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For those who keep up with legislative actions at the State level, you may already be aware of the numerous bills presented at this year’s session. This 83rd Regular Session of the Texas Legislature closed out late May, and included bills that were specific to the healthcare world.

Medicaid Cost Containment was inserted to the state’s budget; this calls for efficiency and cost savings in the Medicaid program naming key target areas for savings. Some of these provisions include the focus of non-urgent use of emergency room services by Medicaid recipients, hospital imaging rates, and prior authorization reviews. At this time, it’s unclear of how this will directly impact rural hospitals, such as our own – Bayside Community Hospital.

If you’ve visited Bayside Community Hospital’s Emergency Department recently, you may have experienced some of the regulatory mandates to operate in a more cost effective manner by screening patients who arrive with non-emergent (minor) issues. So, I guess you can say that we’re a step ahead of the game.

Some of the additional bills presented are not so much worth mentioning, but others may be beneficial in light of recent news; those relating to mental health and women’s health.

With regards to mental health services, a certain amount of money was appropriated to help reduce waiting lists and increase services from local mental health authorities. We, in healthcare, realize that the state’s mental health system remains grossly underfunded and a few of the actions taken are expected to lead to expanded availability of mental health services in rural areas.

There were also several programs mentioned relating to women’s health. The additional women’s health care programs through the Department of State Health Services provide for funding that would go to public hospitals and clinics, and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). This funding was cut at the last session and resulted in some clinics closing down for the lack thereof. There’s now an additional amount of funding proposed to be allocated to additional women’s health program services. For additional information or assistance, please contact Bayside Clinic at (409) 267-3143; ask for the Outreach Department Supervisor.

Overall, this was a good financial year for the State of Texas. There was more money from oil and gas production, as well as sales tax revenue. Due to the stronger financial position of the state, lawmakers were allowed to fill in many of the budget cuts from the last session.

While we still don’t know how these, among other bills or changes, will affect our communities, we look forward to continuing to keep you updated. In the meantime, rest assured that we’re here for you, our community; here to continue being “What You Need, Where You Are”.