

Veterans' Health Benefits Can Benefit States

Washington state is saving millions of dollars by steering low-income veterans, active duty service members and their families away from Medicaid and into veteran and military health care programs, which, unlike Medicaid, are funded entirely by the federal government. Often it's just a matter of educating them on these benefits.

The state's Veterans Benefit Enhancement Program uses federal data from PARIS (Public Assistance Reporting Information System) to identify Medicaid beneficiaries (especially veterans receiving costly long-term care) who may qualify for various VA and military health coverage benefits, including long-term care and prescription drugs. Once the veterans and their families are identified, they are referred to the Washington Department of Veteran Affairs, a partner in the program, to get connected with appropriate health services.

In 2011, the state saved \$5.7 million in Medicaid costs, and a total of \$21 million since the start of the program in 2003.

"Average active duty salaries for new soldiers are low enough that their children and families can qualify for Medicaid or CHIP, especially in Washington where our eligibility level for kids is 300 percent above the federal poverty guidelines," says Bill Allman, project analyst for the program. Twenty-seven states have eligibility levels over 200 percent of poverty for children.

Currently, at least four other states—California, Connecticut, Kansas and Texas—are in the process of establishing similar programs.

—Erica Chavez and Laura Tobler

What is PARIS?

- ◆ The Public Assistance Reporting Information System is a federal database on recipients of public assistance.
- ◆ It allows states to share information across statelines.
- ◆ States have been required to contribute data to PARIS since 2009.
- ◆ Using Social Security numbers, states can track if Medicaid beneficiaries are receiving duplicate services in other states or other federal benefits.

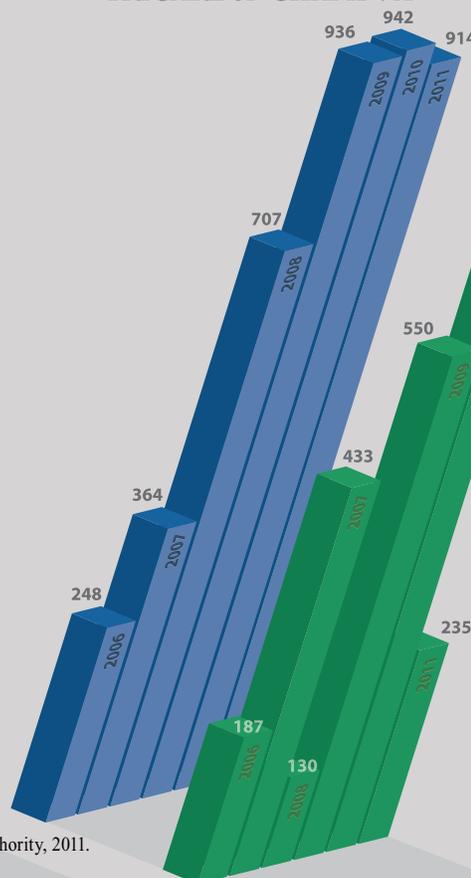
Washington Saves Millions in Medical Costs



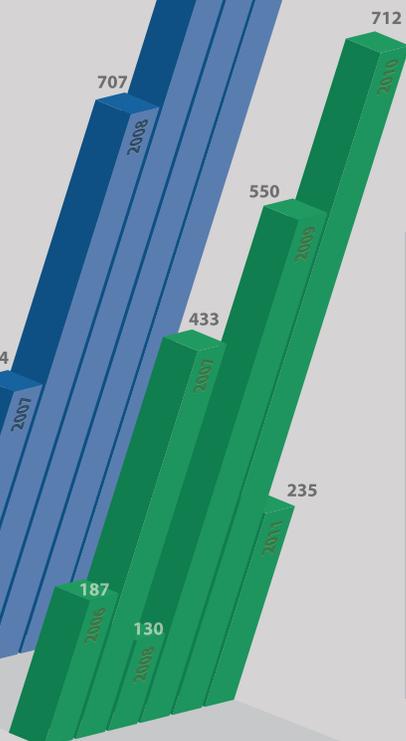
The Number of Veterans Directed to VA Health, TRICARE or CHAMPVA

TRICARE covers military retirees, active duty military personnel and Department of Defense civilian employees. CHAMPVA covers dependants of military personnel who are totally and permanently disabled, or were killed in action.

TRICARE or CHAMPVA



VA Health



Sources: Veteran's Benefit Enhance Program and Washington State Health Care Authority, 2011.

CORRECTION:

A map published on page 5 in the March issue of State Legislatures contained incorrect minimum wages for eight states. The correct figures are: Arizona, \$7.65; Colorado, \$7.64; Florida, \$7.67; Montana, \$7.65; Ohio, \$7.70; Oregon, \$8.80; Vermont, \$8.46; and Washington, \$9.04.