

Western Governors' Association
Policy Resolution 06-15
Sedona, Arizona
June 13, 2006

Meeting the Healthcare Needs of our National Guard and their Families

A. BACKGROUND

1. The National Guard is the oldest military organization in the United States. The citizen-soldiers that make up the National Guard have fought in every conflict in U.S. history. Today, 54,000 Guard soldiers and airmen are deployed overseas.
2. The past year was the National Guard's busiest year since World War II. At one point in 2005, the Guard provided roughly half of the combat forces in Iraq and the bulk of U.S. personnel in the Balkans and the Sinai Peninsula. In addition, Guardsmen comprised 90 percent of the ground troops in Louisiana and Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina.
3. Many National Guard personnel and their families face challenges in the continuity and access of health care services. TRICARE, a managed care program of the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), was created in the early 1990s as a better way to provide health care services for active duty military personnel and their families and for military retirees and their families. It receives its funding as part of the annual defense budget, which is approved by Congress and signed by the President.
4. On December 18, 2005, Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006. The Act, in part, provides for every member of the National Guard to have access to TRICARE healthcare coverage on a cost-share basis.
5. Members who have been called up to active duty for 90 days or more can participate in TRICARE Reserve Select. Members of the National Guard who are unemployed or cannot access healthcare coverage because their employer does not offer it can participate in TRICARE Standard. Members of the National Guard who are employed and currently participating in their employer's healthcare coverage but would like to instead participate in TRICARE can also participate in TRICARE Standard.
6. Effective October 1, 2006, TRICARE coverage for all members of the National Guard will be available.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. The Governors commend Congress for recognizing the need for a comprehensive health care solution for our National Guard personnel.
2. The Governors urge and strongly encourage employers to assist to the maximum extent possible with the cost share for which National Guard enrollees in TRICARE are responsible.
3. The Governors strongly support efforts to increase the federal share of premium costs of National Guard enrollees in TRICARE.
4. The Governors laud the 90,000 plus healthcare providers in the Western Region that accept TRICARE patients and urge more providers to join their fellow healthcare professionals in serving our nation's citizen soldiers.
5. The Governors encourage the federal government to streamline the process for health care providers to become TRICARE providers, to reduce paperwork, and to expedite reimbursements to providers. The Governors also believe it is important for reimbursement rates to be set at levels that ensure health care providers participate in TRICARE so that National Guard enrollees have access to health care services they need.
6. Governors call on DOD and Congress to establish expedited, enhanced provider outreach effort to improve TRICARE access for military families.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVES

1. The Western Governors' Association shall convey this resolution to the appropriate members and committees of the U.S. Congress and the Secretary of Defense.
2. The Western Governors' Association shall post this resolution to its Web site to be referred to and transmitted as necessary.
3. WGA will continue to assist the Governors by monitoring and reporting on further developments with regards to the TRICARE program.