

New Orleans Association of Health Underwriters


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News You Can Use

FEBRUARY 2004 Volume 3, Nu

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NOAHU Luncheon

Health Saving Accounts

& Their Impact on Health Benefits

featuring

Dick Boever

President | TaxFree P

11:30am Cash Bar/Netw

12:00 pm Lunch Ser

Andrea's Restaurant in I

[Click here for more](#)

WANTED:

We are planning to create a class for people to pursue the RHU designation. However, we need an instructor to teach the class. The plan is to begin a series of 3 classes beginning April 1st and ending in December. This would have participants who passed all of their tests using their designations by this time next year. The class would meet once a week for 8 weeks at a time. If anyone is interested or know a possible candidate, please email info@noahu.org.

NOAHU Board Member Recognized

NOAHU Board of Directors Public Relations Director and parliamentarian Mort Ke was invited to join the National Association of Parliamentarians. After passing it with a score of 100%, Mort has now joined the national association and earned designation of Parliamentarian. Congratulations, Mort! We'd be *out of order* without you!

SAVE THE DATE! 2004 Health Care Expo - Wednesday, May 19th

The Official
CITYBUSINESS

Your Name In Print?

If you are an NOAHU member, be on the lookout for the February 9th edition of New C CityBusiness magazine. This issue features an advertisement recognizing all of NOAHU members. Just another benefit of your membership in NOAHU!



Dr. Fred Cerise

Blanco Names New DHH Chief

Fred Cerise, an LSU-and-Harvard-educated doctor who has made a career of caring for the poor and uninsured, will take over the helm of the state's \$5.4 billion health agency, Gov. Kathleen Blanco said.

Cerise leaves his post as administrator of LSU's Earl K. Long Medical Center, Baton Rouge's charity hospital, to become Secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals.

Blanco has said for weeks that she wanted a physician to lead the health agency at a time when the state is struggling with how to care for the uninsured and provide more home and community-based care. She said she was particularly looking for one with administrative skills and familiarity with Medicaid and dealing with the uninsured.

Cerise, an internal medicine specialist who's been a part of LSU's public hospital system for years, fit the bill on all counts, she said.

"There were lots of good candidates. I just like his perspective. He's open. He's very direct and speaks with a certain authority that I can appreciate," Blanco said. "He has an understanding of public health policy, and he's run a good ship at Earl K. Long."

Cerise makes \$200,000 annually, pay that covers both administrative and clinical responsibilities at Earl K. Long -- the hospital that treats the Baton Rouge area's poor and uninsured.

Outgoing DHH Secretary David Hood's pay package was \$123,000 a year.

Blanco said she will ask the Legislature to allow her administration to shuffle funds around DHH to increase the pay for the secretary's job.

"I don't think that people should be punished who work for state government," Blanco s

Cerise said he's "got a good feel for the challenges -- both individually and population- particularly for the uninsured, but also the rest of the state as a whole ... the uninsured insured."

But Cerise also said he knows he's got a lot to learn about many areas of the massive agency as he moves from a public hospital with an \$80 million budget to managing a \$ billion enterprise. More than \$4 billion of it is programs funded through the government Medicaid health-insurance program for the poor.

Included is care for the elderly and disabled, those with drug, alcohol and gambling ad and mental illness.

Cerise was one of two physicians on a list of three candidates recommended by Blanc health care task force.

Representatives of health-care interests who attended the announcement news confer said they were pleased with the appointment.

"He's extremely talented and qualified. He's done a good job at Earl K. Long. He's a gc person to come in to address hospital issues," said Sean Prados, a Louisiana Hospital Association executive.

Kyle Ardoin, chief of a coalition of health-care providers, said Cerise "is willing to listen make us part of the process to develop solutions" to problems that plague the state.

"He's a good person who cares, whose heart is in the right place. I'm confident he's go make decisions that are made for the women and children in this state," said Sandra A executive director of the Louisiana Maternal and Child Health Coalition.

Cerise served as medical director of LSU's Health Care Services Division when diseas management programs were initiated -- programs that try preventative action against t disease outcomes.

Cerise has been administrator of Earl K. Long for the past year and immediately begar wrestling with budget problems, prompted by cuts in state spending affecting LSU's pu hospital system. It was his first foray into learning the ins and outs of health-care financ

Cerise holds degrees from the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, the LSU School of Medicine in New Orleans and Harvard School of Public Health in Boston.

From 2thead

Playing for the Angels

Tennis Tournament

March 19-21, 2004

Aurora Country Club

Registration Fee: \$50 per team + 1 can of balls

Men's & Women's Doubles Divisions

All skill levels welcome!!!! All proceeds benefit Angels' Place. For information, [click here!](#)

NAHU Storms Washington!

Be there!

For more info, [click here.](#)

Efficient Email Tips

- Much incoming e-mail can be read once, then promptly deleted—this means less e-mail clutter to wade through. At the least, do a clean-up once a month.
- Create email folders for specific clients, projects, or subject areas, rather than leaving them in your inbox forever. You can drag and drop to file each email, or you can create filters to drive emails automatically to a folder you designate. But don't go overboard -- too many na specific folders makes it harder to locate emails later.
- If your email software doesn't allow you to create folders, an alternative is to u As to save emails as text files. Group them into directories by client, project, fu etc.
- Use detailed subject headers - sometimes the whole message can be in the h This saves time when searching for old e-mails later on.
- Insert "NRN" in subject headers when no reply is necessary.
- Customize your email software to display all the information you need at a gla Microsoft Outlook allows you to add columns to your email screen.
- Delete unneeded e-mails regularly. You usually only need to save the last me an ongoing "conversation" – the most recent message contains quotebacks of previous messages.



- Keep your inbox lean so it becomes an extension of your To-Do list. Everything that must be kept should be dragged into the correct folder. Only emails that require a response should remain in the inbox for more than a day.
- If you follow the above tips, you won't need to print most of your emails – you save time by filing and accessing them digitally! However, for a meeting away from your office or a project for which most information is not digital – then printing emails makes sense. Printing emails should be the exception however, not the rule.
- Unfortunately, filters are no longer adequate to control spam. Consider a spam blocker that checks incoming emails against a list of “accepted senders” that you create. Two ‘permission-only’ programs are Postmaster Pro and Spam Arrest.
- Create templates for routine replies
- Last but not least, know when to telephone. Unless you need to send the same message to a group, or keep a record of what you said and to whom, the phone is faster.



Medicaid Providing Better Services for Fewer Dollars *DHH Report Shows Improved Health Care for More Citizens While Controlling Spending*

Baton Rouge—A report issued by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals shows a trend of Medicaid spending at or below the U.S. growth rate. Cost controls in the program have saved Louisiana taxpayers more than \$6 billion since 1996, while Medicaid has nearly doubled the number of children covered and improved both access to health care and quality of services.

“We have shown it doesn't take vast amounts of added funds to improve health care,” DHH Secretary David Hood said about setting priorities and redirecting funds into services that keep people healthy.”

The report highlights changes in the program's administration to make access easier and more efficient for Medicaid recipients. The report also notes the increase of more than 300,000 children receiving services through the Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program, which began in 1998.

Hood said while Medicaid spending was brought under control, many key improvements were implemented. In addition, about 700,000 Medicaid recipients were enrolled into CommunityCARE, guaranteeing them access to a primary care physician. Reimbursement rates to physicians, dentists, nursing homes, rural hospitals and clinics, outpatient hospital services and many other medical providers were also significantly increased.

“It's about keeping people healthy,” Hood said, noting the shift from emergency care to preventive care saves the health system money by diagnosing and treating problems early to avoid or help control chronic illnesses.

According to the report, changes in program management are a stark contrast to the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the state became dependent on federal disproportionate share funds known as “dispro.” A 1995 Washington Post article in the report illustrates the dire financial situation the Medicaid program faced in 1995 when members of Congress and U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary were asked to help repair Louisiana's broken system.

“In the early 1990s, the state became dependent on federal funds that fueled spectacular growth rates and out-of-control spending while health care outcomes remained minimal,” Hood said. “We have succeeded in doing what we should have been doing in the early 1990s, and we have done it with significantly less money. We must now focus on maintaining an affordable health care budget that produces better results.”

Hood said news articles from the mid-1990s should serve as reminders about the consequences of unfettered growth and over-reliance on federal funds.

“For the current fiscal year, the Legislature has appropriated more than \$300 million in non-reoccurring federal funds to avoid massive budget cuts to health care,” he explained. “Finding the state dollars to replace those funds will be a challenge. We need a long-range plan to free us from unreliable funding sources. Thankfully, the department has seen a growth to perhaps the lowest rate in the nation, which greatly helps to mitigate future funding problems.”

He said the challenges ahead include expanding access to affordable health care for the uninsured, providing more long-term care for the elderly and people with disabilities, and stabilizing financing for the Medicaid program.

The complete report is available online at www.dhh.state.la.us.

Get New Customers from Old Ones



Phones not ringing? Orders down? Customers not walking in the door? It's time to take action. But before you spend a fortune trying to drum up new business, why not get in touch with those people who once loved you -- your former customers?

As hard as companies work to solicit and serve customers, it's surprising how little most businesses do to stay in touch with those they once served so well. Many seem to have the attitude that once a job is done, it's done; once a product sold, and the relationship with the customer is over.

That's short-term thinking. Former customers are the best source for future sales. After all, satisfied customers tell so they're an important referral source. It costs two to 40 times as much to acquire a customer as it does to keep one once you've got one, don't lose them.

Of course, it's best if you develop an ongoing customer communication program. But don't wait for that if you need the cash register now.

To get started on a contact program:

- **Make a list.** If you're like most of us, you've got contact information all over: stacks of business card address lists in word processing files, customer invoices on a different computer altogether. Take hours to compile a list. Start with ALL former customers or clients -- go back at least five years. **But stop there.** Add anyone who has been -- or might be -- a source of referrals. This includes industry colleagues, suppliers, friends, even some relatives. Go through your address book, your accounts business card stacks, and your email in-box to jog your memory.
- **Select contact methods.** Phone calls are a simple, personal, and effective way to touch base, and it's easier for someone to ignore your phone call than it is an email or a letter. Of course, calling takes time, so you may want to limit that to only your most likely prospects. E-mail can also be effective if you make it personal rather than seeming like spam. I suspect you may not have current email addresses for many people on your contact list. So don't overlook the mail. The key is to be as personal as possible.
- **Figure out what to say.** You don't need a specific reason to contact a former customer. You can tell them the truth, "it's been a while since we've talked, and I'm just touching base. I wanted to see how you are and if there's anything I can do for you." You'll probably get more sales, however, if you make a special offer, especially with a significant discount. One caution: if you haven't been in contact with some former customers for a long time, find out what's going on with them before making a sales pitch; their situation may have changed considerably. With referral sources and other contacts, tell them you're touching base to see how they're doing and to see if they know of anyone who might need your products or services.
- **Determine how ambitious you want to be.** Do you want to call just a handful? Or would you rather call 8,000 people? Find a happy medium between the two extremes.

During the recent boom years, many of us were so busy serving current accounts that we didn't have the time -- or the energy -- to sustain connections with former customers or potential referral sources. Regardless of how well your business is doing now, it's time to get back to those fundamentals. Remember, "word of mouth" advertising doesn't just happen; it has to be nurtured. Stay in touch. Now, pick up that phone!

Blanco Plans Health Care Summit for March

Governor Kathleen Blanco has set the dates for her health care summit to devise a roadmap for reducing the uninsured population in Louisiana and providing better care. The summit will take place March 3-4.

Hosted by U.S. Sen. John Breaux and Blanco, the summit is shaping up to be a wide-ranging affair that the governor says has gotten such interest in participation it likely will be held in New Orleans because of its size.

Blanco said that she hopes the two-day summit will devise a "two-year emergency plan" of policy and budget changes for the short term.

She says teams of people will continue after the summit to work on a comprehensive, long-term blueprint for how to improve health care, save money and shrink the number of people who don't have health insurance.

On the list of topics Blanco hopes to be tackled are children's health care, long-term care for the elderly, the disabled and people with mental health problems, the high cost of prescription drugs, graduate medical education, the future of care for the poor and uninsured, the future of the charity hospitals, public health epidemics like obesity and diabetes and access to preventive care.



Picture Yourself Here!

Win a Trip MAUI!!

Imagine spending a lounging on the beach Maui! For a \$20 donation HUPAC, you will get a to win a week in a beach condo and roundtrip air two! Don't miss out on opportunity of a lifetime winner will be drawn at Conference in March.

Ebersole, past NOA president and Region 6 Chair, will have tickets February luncheon! Come before it's too late! If you have any questions, email info@noahu.org

Do you have something to say? Let us know what you think about News You Can Use. Do have any comments, suggestions or articles you'd like to see in future editions? Let us know- we're listening!

First Name:

Last Name:

E-Mail:

Comments:

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Send