NEWS FROM THE GA ACP

Overview: 2019 fiscal year budget for the Georgia Department of Community Health

Gov. Nathan Deal proposes a 2019 budget of $2.79 billion in state general funds for the Department of Community Health. This is an increase of $249.2 million from the 2018 fiscal year, mostly to replace non-recurring court settlement funds in last year's budget and to offset a decrease in the federal matching rate for Medicaid. Federal funding for the department is $7.8 billion in the 2019 fiscal year that begins July 1, 2018. The proposed state budget also allots a total of $609.3 million from a tobacco industry legal settlement, nursing home provider fees and hospital provider fees. The budget includes another $3.65 billion from the State Health Benefit Plan Division, which manages health insurance coverage for state employees, retirees and their dependents.

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Gov. Nathan Deal tells Blue Cross, Piedmont Healthcare to resume negotiations

Gwinnett Daily Post

With nearly 600,000 state employees, retirees and family members hanging in the balance, Gov. Nathan Deal decided Tuesday that Blue Cross Blue Shield and Piedmont Health couldn’t just walk away from each other. The governor’s office said he directed the insurance provider and the medical care provider to resume negotiations to settle their ongoing contract dispute. Blue Cross Blue Shield provides insurance to state employees and retirees and, if the dispute isn’t resolved, those people and their families would find Piedmont hospitals out of their network. READ MORE

As number of HealthCare.gov brokers dwindles, Georgia passes bill to protect their commissions

Modern Healthcare

Georgia’s Legislature passed a bill late last week that requires health insurers to pay commissions to agents and brokers for almost all policies sold if the insurer included commissions in its rate filings. The bill is meant to protect insurance brokers at a time when health plans across the nation are slashing or eliminating commissions for sales Affordable Care Act-compliant individual health policies. READ MORE

Evolution: Telemedicine to digital health

By Christina Thielst

Digital health continues its expansion beyond more traditional telemedicine modalities health professionals find new ways to apply technologies. In recent years, this expansion has become more of an evolution as the Internet, health information technology and
even social media are blended into systems and processes. Today, digital health might be obtaining a virtual second opinion, online eye examinations and even a variety of supportive recovery therapies. READ MORE

**Apple reveals AC Wellness medical centers to focus on patient experience and population health**

Healthcare Finance

Apple will launch a group of internal health centers alongside a push to improve the health and wellness of its employees. The major consumer tech company quietly published a webpage for the program, called AC Wellness Network, which includes a description of the company's goals as well as information on a number of open positions. Apple’s move toward employee health comes fast on the heels of a surprising partnership tech rival Amazon forged with JPMorgan Chase and Berkshire Hathaway for its own independent health care company focused on improving employee health at-cost. READ MORE