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CRAIN'S HEALTH pulse

A daily newsletter on the business of health care

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TODAY'S NEWS

ADULT DAY CARE

CMS named Metropolitan Jewish Health System one of five providers in the United States—and the only one in New York state—to participate in a national demonstration project of adult day health care for Medicare beneficiaries. For the project, home health agencies partner with adult day care facilities to provide care as a substitute for a portion of services otherwise provided at home. Currently, Medicare does not reimburse for adult day care, although Medicaid and some private insurers do. The three-year project begins in June. MJHS will be paid 95% of the home health prospective payment rate, and Medicare enrollees won't have any out-of-pocket costs for the additional services.

MEDICAL BILLS

One in five adults is grappling with unpaid medical bills, according to a new study from the Commonwealth Fund. Researchers interviewed adults ages 19 to 64 and found that nearly two-thirds of those with medical bills or debt problems said that they or their family members were insured when they incurred the debt. The study also

PULSE EXTRA: This week's edition is the second of two highlighting data about the growth in the radiology and imaging professions. To read *Pulse Extra*, scroll down to Page 2.

Working Families Party courts GOP

Republican State Sen. Nick Spano may be sponsoring the top priority of the Working Families Party—a bill to require employers to offer health insurance. But that isn't enough to guarantee an endorsement; he needs to get it passed, according to Patrick Welsh, chairman of the WFP's local chapter.

Mr. Welsh says his chapter will interview the candidates in early May. In 2004, Mr. Spano earned the WFP line by helping to pass a minimum-wage bill.

He then defeated Democrat Andrea Stewart-Cousins by 18 votes.

Holding the seat is a top priority for Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, and the threat of a Democratic takeover has given the WFP unprecedented leverage in the chamber. The party usually backs Democrats but needs GOP support to get its health care bill enacted. WFP staff and volunteers went door-to-door pitching the bill in eight Republican senators' districts, including Mr. Spano's.

found that a high proportion of adults who were forced to go without insurance and had chronic illness cut back on their medications or skipped them entirely because they could not afford them. Most of these people relied on emergency rooms for care.

MENTAL HEALTH

The Assembly overrode Gov. George Pataki's veto of \$850,000 for stipends for mental health housing in upstate New York. It also overrode his veto of \$810,000 for scattered-site housing to help people with mental illness move from adult homes to independent living. Both are important issues for a new statewide coalition, the New York State Campaign for Mental Health Housing, which supports legislation sponsored by Sen. Thomas Morahan, R-

New City, and Assemblyman Peter Rivera, D-Bronx, the chairmen of the Senate and Assembly standing committees on mental health. The bills require the state Office of Mental Health to establish a waiting list for people with mental illness seeking community housing and support services. The coalition recently retained Weingarten Reid & McNally as its lobbyist.

AT A GLANCE

ADS: The GNYHA/1199 SEIU Healthcare Education Project will spend \$1 million over the next week to air two ads statewide with the message that the governor's budget cuts would devastate New York's hospitals and force them to slash key staff, services and access to care.



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