Fact Sheet

The Hilltop Institute
analysis to advance the health of vulnerable populations

Who We Are

Located at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), The Hilltop Institute (www.hilltopinstitute.org) is a non-partisan health research organization dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of vulnerable populations. Hilltop conducts research, analysis, and evaluations on behalf of government agencies, foundations, and nonprofit organizations at the national, state, and local levels. Hilltop is committed to addressing complex issues through informed, objective, and innovative research and analysis.

Hilltop staff have considerable expertise and experience in:

- Analyzing federal, state, and local health care policies to optimize access to services, quality of care, provider performance, and purchaser value
- Analyzing and recommending Medicaid payment systems and rates
- Developing, implementing, and evaluating new delivery and financing models for publicly financed health systems, including preventive health, behavioral health, oral health, and long-term services and supports (LTSS)
- Supporting community health improvement through analysis and technical assistance

Partnerships in Maryland

Formed in 1994 as the Center for Health Program Development and Management in a unique collaboration with the Maryland Medicaid program, Hilltop was instrumental in the 1997 launch of HealthChoice, Maryland's Medicaid managed care program. Hilltop maintains a nationally recognized partnership with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to analyze state health policies and develop solutions for the Maryland Medicaid program.

Since 1997, Hilltop has carried out rate setting and actuarial responsibilities for the HealthChoice program. This involves developing a risk-adjusted payment methodology using the Johns Hopkins Adjusted Clinical Groups (ACG) System, designing provider incentives, forecasting enrollment, projecting and monitoring the HealthChoice budget, and monitoring the financial performance of managed care organizations (MCOs). Hilltop works in partnership with the state of Maryland and actuarial firms responsible for certifying rates. Hilltop also develops payment methodologies and rates for Maryland's nursing homes, school health programs, and PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly). Hilltop is nationally recognized for its work in the collection, validation, and use of encounter data for managed care programs.

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Hilltop addresses issues that touch upon not only Medicaid, but also other publicly administered programs such as aging services, public health, Medicare, behavioral health, oral health, state coverage initiatives, and federally funded AIDS initiatives. In addition to Maryland Medicaid, Hilltop has worked with the Maryland Health Care Commission; the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission; the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission; the Maryland Department of Aging; the Maryland State Department of Education; and MDH's Divisions of Behavioral Health and Disabilities and Public Health Services. Hilltop also works with local government and health and human services agencies in the state.

The Hilltop Institute conducted a major project on hospital community benefits with the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC), which resulted in publications and presentations to state and national policymaking audiences and led to the establishment of Hilltop's Hospital Community Benefit Program (see below).

On March 24, 2010, Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley signed an Executive Order that created the Health Care Reform Coordinating Council (HCRCC) to make recommendations regarding Maryland's implementation of the federal health reform legislation. Hilltop provided extensive staff support to the HCRCC, conducted an in-depth analysis of the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, developed the *Hilltop Health Care Reform Simulation Model* to project Maryland's costs and savings associated with implementing health reform, and drafted the interim and final reports to the Governor. The financial model has gained the attention of other states, including New Mexico (see below), the federal government, and economists across the country. Hilltop continues to support Maryland's health reform implementation by providing consultation and technical assistance to MDH and the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange.

Work with Other States and Clients

In addition to its work in Maryland, Hilltop is engaged in projects with other states, the federal government, and foundations. Hilltop is and has been engaged in major projects to transform or evaluate LTSS systems in New Mexico, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. Hilltop also conducted the first formal evaluation of New Mexico's State Coverage Insurance (SCI) program and adapted the *Hilltop Health Care Reform Simulation Model* to project New Mexico's costs and savings associated with implementing health reform.

Under contract from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Hilltop and IMPAQ International LLC conducted a four-year evaluation of the Medicare Acute Care Episode (ACE) Demonstration. The ACE Demonstration used a global payment for a single episode of care as an alternative approach to payment for service delivery under traditional Medicare fee-for-service (FFS).

Hilltop also has performed work for the Health Resources and Services Administration in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, and other federal agencies. Hilltop conducts and has conducted projects for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the PEW Charitable Trusts, The Commonwealth Fund, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the John A. Hartford Foundation.

With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Kresge Foundation, Hilltop established its Hospital Community Benefit Program, a central resource created specifically for state

and local policymakers who seek to ensure that tax-exempt hospital community benefit activities are responsive to pressing community health needs.

Data Warehouse

Hilltop developed and manages a data warehouse containing Maryland's Medicaid claims and encounter data. Hilltop processes and warehouses data on service utilization by more than 1,200,000 Medicaid enrollees and Medicaid payments totaling over $7 billion. Hilltop processes over 12 million Medicaid records each month, creating yearly databases in excess of 150 million records. The records store demographic and eligibility data, as well as information categorized into at least the following major domains of medical care: inpatient, outpatient, professional services, pharmaceuticals, long-term care, and home health care. In its entirety, the Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) for Maryland is composed of over 80 *SAS*-ready data tables, the largest with more than 500 variables and 100 million records. Information in Hilltop's MMIS files includes: dates, durations, and costs of services; venue and provider identifiers; and diagnostic and procedure codes. Codes are typically based on international standards (e.g., ICD-9, DRGs, and CPTs), although some state coding also applies. These records are used to generate standardized and customized reviews of Maryland's Medicaid system.

Hilltop developed and maintains a *Decision Support System (DSS)*, a password-protected system maintained for the exclusive use of MDH, which provides easy access to data on Medicaid program eligibility, enrollment, service utilization, and payments. Currently, about 130 MDH staff members are registered to use the DSS. Hilltop added WebFocus by Information Builders, Inc. (IBI), a business intelligence software that allows for new features on the DSS, including the Managed Reporting Environment (MRE), a user-friendly point-and-click graphical interface that has access to MMISII detail data; allows MMIS users without programming skills to create reports, graphs, and compound reports or dashboards; and can be modified to restrict the capabilities available to match the skills and experience of the user. Since 2012, Hilltop has been developing mapping dashboards that portray Maryland's public health data. The dashboards are published on the MDH website and allow public use of these data.

Among Maryland Medicaid enrollees are approximately 105,000 individuals who are also eligible for Medicare (Medicare-Medicaid enrollees). Since 2002, CMS has provided Hilltop with Medicare claims corresponding to those Medicare-Medicaid enrollees, which Hilltop refines and maintains. This unique data set enables Hilltop's researchers to analyze nursing home lengths of stay and to better understand how coverage by both Medicare and Medicaid impacts utilization, delivery of services, and costs. Hilltop is an expert in linking Medicare and Medicaid data to study issues affecting Medicare-Medicaid enrollees.

Hilltop is known for its expert complex data analysis and expertise in SAS programming. Hilltop staff are SAS certified professionals and teach SAS to UMBC students.

Hilltop coordinated the development of *LTSSMaryland*, Maryland's integrated long-term services and supports system, and is now utilizing the system to analyze program participation, service utilization, and functional assessment data and provide data-driven policy guidance across the many facets of Maryland's rebalancing efforts. Hilltop is also now providing consultation, analysis, and technical assistance to Mississippi as it develops an integrated LTSS system.

Hilltop also maintains several other databases that record health information associated with the delivery of medical care to vulnerable populations within and outside the state. These include: the federally mandated Minimal Data Set (MDS) to monitor nursing home admission status of patients; surveillance of early screening initiatives; and actuarial analyses in order to set and adjust service payment rates. Altogether, the wealth of information stored by Hilltop gives its researchers unique access to data, allowing for facile, in-depth analyses.

Hilltop acquires and analyzes Medicaid claims data from other states as required on a project-specific basis. For example, Hilltop obtained data from New Mexico on the Medicaid population receiving LTSS in order to carry out work related to the development of federal 1915(b) and 1915(c) waivers and associated cost neutrality and cost-effectiveness analyses. Claims data from Rhode Island were used to develop an LTSS rebalancing model for that state. In addition, Hilltop obtained data from New Mexico's managed care organizations to evaluate its SCI program.

Data Security

The Hilltop Institute hosts protected health information (PHI) from a variety of sources and complies with all requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). Data transfers are kept secure through the use of a secure file transfer protocol (FTP) system that complies with HIPAA standards. Audits on Hilltop's security procedures are performed by the Maryland Office of Legislative Audits and the University System of Maryland. Additional information on Hilltop's security procedures and practices is available upon request.

Staff

Hilltop's interdisciplinary team of 50 professionals includes health services researchers, clinicians, economists, attorneys, statisticians, social scientists, computer programmers, and data analysts. Staff expertise includes program development and evaluation, data analysis, research methods, public policy analysis, health services research, economics, and health care administration.

Facilities

Hilltop occupies approximately 13,000 square feet of space on the 2nd and 3rd floors of Sondheim Hall at the UMBC campus. The facilities include private and shared workstations for staff members, as well as common meeting rooms. Library and information services are provided through UMBC's Albin O. Kuhn Library and through the Office of Information Technology. All faculty, staff, and students at UMBC also have access to the electronic literature and information resources of the system-wide University of Maryland library services.

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