

LeadingAge™ Wyoming

February 21, 2025

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**2025 Spring Conference
Holiday Inn
721 Granite Peak Drive, Casper, WY
May 28-29, 2025**

[LAW Spring Meeting Information](#)

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Medicaid: A Lifeline for Vulnerable Populations

Medicaid in Wyoming provides essential healthcare access to some of our most vulnerable residents, including pregnant women, children, and individuals with disabilities. Given the absence of Medicaid expansion and the state's current categorical eligibility requirements, Wyoming's Medicaid population is likely among the highest-risk in the nation.

In our nursing homes, Medicaid holds considerable monopsony power, covering over 70% of nursing home stays statewide.

The Importance of Medicare & Medicaid in Wyoming: More Than Healthcare

Medicare and Medicaid account for more than half of patient revenue in nearly all of Wyoming's rural hospitals. These facilities are foundational to local and state economic development. Weakening their financial stability will have widespread ripple effects throughout Wyoming's economy.

1.

There are 68 hospitals and nursing homes with a **total employee compensation of just over \$1 billion annually.**

2.

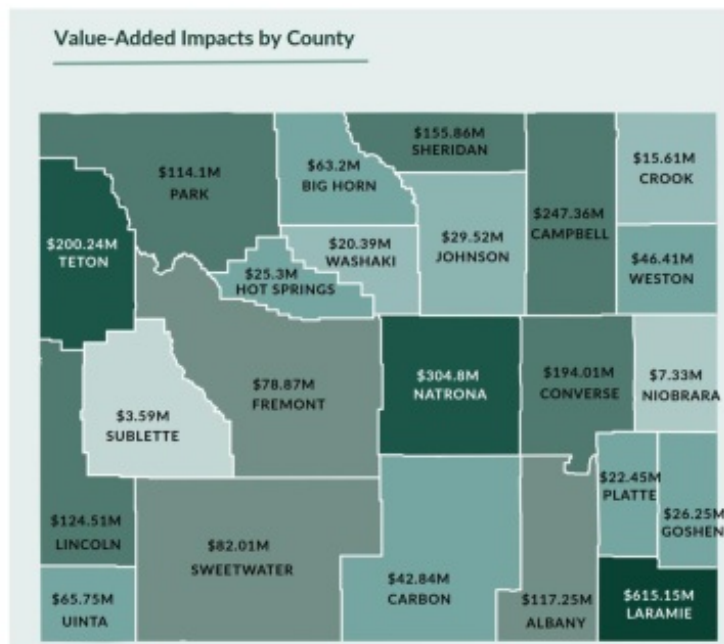
The direct **value added** (i.e., GDP) to Wyoming's economy is approximately **\$2.56 billion annually.**

3.

Hospitals and nursing homes support over 32,000 jobs, when considering direct, indirect, and induced effects.

4.

Hospitals and nursing homes create over **\$79 million in state tax revenue** and over \$520 million in county, state and federal taxes combined.



Financial Challenges and the Need for Support

Wyoming's healthcare system—an economic backbone as well as a vital service provider for our communities—is already struggling under:

- Rising labor and drug costs
- Administrative burdens from insurance companies
- One of the highest uninsured rates in the country

Every Critical Access Hospital in Wyoming operated at a loss in 2023. Further reductions in funding for patient care will put both patients and healthcare facilities at immediate risk.

Take Action

Preserving and strengthening Medicare and Medicaid is essential for Wyoming's healthcare system, workforce, and economic stability. We urge lawmakers to ensure continued investment in these vital programs to safeguard the health and well-being of our communities.

As the Senate and House Budget Committees deliberate on their Fiscal Year 2025 budget resolutions, the Wyoming Hospital Association and LeadingAge Wyoming urge policymakers to understand the consequences to Wyoming hospitals and nursing homes—as well as Wyoming's economy and the economies of our local communities—if Congress cuts Medicare and Medicaid.

Holland & Hart 2025 Health Law Compliance Webinar Series

We are pleased to cosponsor Holland & Hart's *complimentary* 13-part Healthcare Compliance Webinar Series beginning at noon Mountain Time, Thursday, March 6, and continuing through mid-September. These one-hour webinar presentations, designed for professionals in the healthcare and life sciences industries, will address compliance issues that frequently affect healthcare providers, hospitals and other facilities, and life sciences companies. Visit the link below to register for the program(s) you're interested in.

Remaining compliant in today's ever-changing healthcare landscape is critical to healthcare providers and their stakeholders. That's why Holland & Hart is planning to launch our **free** 2025 Healthcare Compliance Webinar Series in March. Again, there's no financial obligation—just an opportunity to deliver exceptional compliance education, led by top healthcare attorneys.

The biweekly, one-hour webinar presentations will begin in March. Following each installment, we will post a recording of the webinar along with the presentation and any supplemental materials to our Health Law Blog; all the materials will be available to viewers to download free of charge.

Holland and Hart Compliance Webinar Series

Download the App

Click on the button below to download the App on your phone. We have added the LeadingAge Wyoming spring meeting to the app and all documents will be sent as we get closer.

The App says Wyoming Hospital Association, but please be assured that we have added LeadingAge Wyoming to the app.

[Download our App here](#)



A Totally Wyoming Prescription At Cody Care Center: Take Two Ponies A Week, Repeat

Anyone visiting the Long-Term Care Center at Cody Regional Health might find themselves sharing an elevator with a pony or two. It's not a fluke. In fact, it's just what the doctor ordered. Once a month, two ponies wearing leis, a cat on a leash, and a dog in a rainbow tutu trot into the Long-Term Care Center to bring special medicine to its residents. The halls echo with the soft clip-clop of pony hoofs as they go room to room, to the delight of the residents. "Everybody can understand an animal," said Kyle Watson, a social worker at Cody Regional Health. "They don't need and ask for anything from our residents other than to get some attention."

Many Long-Term Care Center residents struggle to remember names, faces, and daily routines. But they all know Norman and Star, the two ponies who visit them monthly.

On their January trip to the center, Norman and Star were joined by Snow the cat and Hot Pass the dog. Hot Pass was usually the first animal to approach each resident and enter each room, leading

the way for Norman and Star.

Wyo Hoofbeats, a nonprofit in northwest Wyoming that offers equine-assisted therapy, brought the dressed-up animals for the visit to the Long-Term Care Center, one of the many places they visit for their unique therapy experiences. “We take the ponies to elderly care facilities once a week,” said Heather Bales, co-founder and executive director of Wyo Hoofbeats. “We also spend three days a week in the arena doing mental health sessions with clients and horses.” Of the six equines at Wyo Hoofbeats, Norman and Star are the best suited for these visits. They’re the ideal size, have the right temperament, and know how to get into and out of an elevator without much fuss.

Jody Goldbach led Norman, while Sally Gallop led Star. Both women have special training to facilitate the best interactions between people and ponies. “We have to do this as a pair of a mental health professional and an equine specialist,” Bales said. “We have an awesome set of volunteers certified through the Equine Growth and Learning Association. One person’s job is mental health safety, while the other’s job is ensuing physical safety with the animal.” Norman and Star aren’t simply paraded around and gawked at. They get as close as residents allow, receiving pets, scratches, and treats from everyone who wants to see them. “It makes the residents so happy,” Bales said.

When a pony hoof is heard in the hallway, everyone at the center wants to see their old friends Norman and Star. Some residents were already at the door waiting to welcome the animals. Wyo Hoofbeats has been visiting the residents once a month for a year. The center’s staff say the monthly visits have been well-received and highly beneficial to the residents. “The residents love them,” said activities coordinator Joan Benson. “They perk up when they see them, and it usually makes their day.”

Hot Pass leads the door-to-door procession, rushing to each resident in her rainbow tutu before clearing the way for Norman and Star to greet each resident. The residents’ rooms were quickly filled with multiple people and two ponies, with an occasional appearance by Snow the cat nestled on someone’s lap.

As residents stroked and scratched the ponies, they shared their stories with Goldbach and Gallop. Many of the residents at the Cody facility were horse people, so being in the presence of a pony rekindled memories of working with horses and other animals. “They love animals,” Benson said. “We have rabbits and chickens that live here, but not when it gets cold. When the ponies come through, they want to touch and hug them. It’s the perfect thing for them, especially in winter.”

Anyone at the facility during a visit from Wyo Hoofbeats can feel the cheerful vibe as Norman and Star make their way to each room and visit with old friends. Watson said working with Wyo Hoofbeats has been especially beneficial for residents with age-related cognition problems. Being in the presence of a pony provides emotional and mental stimulation that traditional medicine and treatment cannot achieve. “We have residents that don’t or can’t talk or can’t understand conversations, but an animal doesn’t have any judgment,” he said. “A resident who can’t hold a conversation or doesn’t understand an exchange can still have a positive back-and-forth with an animal.”

Bales said there’s “something indescribable about the magic” that Wyo Hoofbeats’ visits bring to the Long-Term Care Facility. Whether it’s stroking the flanks of a pony, holding a cat in their lap, or scratching a friendly dog as it gently checks in, the benefit of each interaction is evident in the eyes of the residents as each interaction occurs. “It’s great therapy for them, and it’s great for all of us,” she said. “Amazing animals, our awesome volunteers, and the excellent social workers and caretakers at the Long-Term Care Center — these visits bring something special to all of us.”

Action Alert: Federal Funding Must Continue Uninterrupted

Despite the rescission of a January 27 White House memo ordering agencies to temporarily pause “agency grant, loan and other financial assistance programs,” the Trump administration remains committed to freeze funding pending a review of program compliance with executive orders announced mid-January. The freeze could potentially impact funding that many LeadingAge members rely on to serve older adults across many care settings and community types.

Urge President Trump not to pause Federal funding via this Action Alert



May 28-29, 2025

LeadingAge Wyoming Spring Meeting
Casper, Wyoming

September 3-4, 2025

LeadingAge Wyoming Annual Meeting
Laramie, Wyoming



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