



# State of Arkansas Collects, Disseminates New Health Data

## Information for State Health Policy Program

### SUMMARY

From 1992 to 1997, the Arkansas Health Resources Commission (formerly the Arkansas Interagency Working Group or IWG) and the Governor's Task Force on Health Care Reform identified health information key to health care reform in the state.

The project was part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) *Information for State Health Policy* national program.

### Key Results

- Under Phase I, the Arkansas Interagency Working Group identified and ranked 34 separate state health policy issues in two major areas:
  - Fiscal issues (health insurance reforms, cost containment, and financing indigent health care).
  - Sexual consequences (teenage pregnancy, infant mortality and low birthweight babies, and sexually transmitted diseases).
- Under Phase II, project staff:
  - Developed and implemented (with legislative support) a Hospital Discharge Data System.
  - Conducted a Family Health Survey of randomly selected households.
  - Enhanced Medicaid claims data.
  - Disseminated its work through newsletters, reports, briefings and public use files.

### Funding

RWJF supported this project through two grants totaling \$797,834.

## **THE PROBLEM**

The project's major focus was to provide information that can be used by state policymakers to address fiscal issues (health insurance reforms, cost containment, and financing indigent health care); and sexual consequences (teenage pregnancy, infant mortality and low birthweight babies, and sexually transmitted diseases).

## **THE PROJECT**

### **Hospital Discharge Data System**

Legislation passed in 1995 mandated the creation of a hospital discharge data system and provided state support for it. Subsequently, regulations for the hospital discharge data system were promulgated, data submission guidelines were developed and implemented, and data collection was initiated.

As of mid-1998, the InfoSHP project had collected 1997 data from the majority of the state's hospitals. By law, data that could identify a patient, provider, facility, or plan is classified as confidential. To help them design data reports for Arkansas, InfoSHP project staff collected hospital discharge data system-based reports from other states.

### **Family Health Survey**

Under InfoSHP, Arkansas fielded a Family Health Survey from fall 1996 to spring 1998. The survey's sample was a random cross-section of Arkansas households, about 200 every month. It collected information from households on health insurance, service use, and access to services.

Although statistics on the uninsured can be computed from the website, the state has not yet completed analyzing the survey data. The future of the survey depends in part on development of a similar survey at the national level that will support state-level estimates (the National Center for Health Statistics' State and Local Area Integrated Telephone Survey).

### **Enhanced Medicaid Claims Analyses**

Arkansas' InfoSHP project sought to better use available Medicaid data for program and policy analyses. InfoSHP received Medicaid claims data and conducted some limited analyses. Since that time, the Medicaid agency has acquired an executive information system to support analyses within the agency.

## Institutionalization

Four of the InfoSHP positions became permanent state positions that will be used to continue work on the hospital discharge data system and other surveys and to continue dissemination activities, including further development of the [website](#).

## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Under InfoSHP, the state enhanced its information infrastructure by collecting new data (e.g., the hospital discharge data system) and improved its capacity to disseminate information (e.g., through the [website](#)). In addition, the Center for Health Statistics gained visibility through project activities and grew in size.

## Communications

Arkansas has communicated information through press releases, newsletters (*Arkansas Health Counts* and *Arkansas Health Risks*), reports, briefings, an Internet homepage (established at <http://health.state.ar.us>, now sending visitors to [www.healthyarkansas.com](http://www.healthyarkansas.com)), and public use files. (See the [Bibliography](#).)

## LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. It is possible, even in small states with low demand for data, for legislators to see the value of data and support data initiatives.** In Arkansas, the legislature supported the creation of a hospital discharge data system.
- 2. Projects in states such as Arkansas, where data are not widely available and not routinely used for policymaking, initially may find it more effective to focus not just on improvements in data infrastructure but also on dissemination of useful products, to stimulate demand for data among policymakers.**
- 3. States need not only to secure positions, but also to recruit qualified staff and keep the positions filled so that timely analyses may be completed.**

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### Prepared by: Robert Mahon

Edited by: Karin Gillespie and Marian Bass

Reviewed by: Marian Bass and Molly McKaughan

Program Officer: James Knickman

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## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*(Current as of date of the report; as provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF; items not available from RWJF.)*

### **Reports**

Murray, Douglas R. "A Hospital Discharge Data System Based On UB-92," position paper submitted to The Governor's Task Force on Health Care Reform, January 13, 1994. (Included in *Health Care Reform in Arkansas: A Report to the Governor and Legislature.*)

Murray, Douglas R. "Establishment of a State Health Data Organization," position paper submitted to The Governor's Task Force on Health Care Reform, February 8, 1994. (Included in *Health Care Reform in Arkansas: A Report to the Governor and Legislature.*)

Murray, Douglas R. "Outpatient Data," discussion paper submitted to The Governor's Task Force on Health Care Reform at the request of the chairman, March 21, 1994. (Included in *Health Care Reform in Arkansas: A Report to the Governor and Legislature.*)

Murray, Douglas R. "Physician Office Data," discussion paper submitted to The Governor's Task Force on Health Care Reform at the request of the chairman, March 21, 1994. (Included in *Health Care Reform in Arkansas: A Report to the Governor and Legislature.*)

Murray, Douglas R. "Health Facilities Surveys," position paper submitted to The Governor's Task Force on Health Care Reform, May 5, 1994. (Included in *Health Care Reform in Arkansas: A Report to the Governor and Legislature.*)

Murray, Douglas R. "Health Professions Licensing Surveys: Improved Data Processing and Analysis for Health Policy," position paper submitted to The Governor's Task Force on Health Care Reform, May 5, 1994. (Included in *Health Care Reform in Arkansas: A Report to the Governor and Legislature.*)

### **Newsletters**

*Arkansas Health Counts*, quarterly newsletter.

*Arkansas Health Risks*, occasional newsletter.

### **Presentations and Testimony**

Douglas R. Murray. "Information for State Health Policy: Where We Stand in Arkansas," presented to Arkansas Health Resources Commission, March 29, 1994.

Douglas R. Murray. "Health Information Systems: The Priorities for Arkansas," invited presentation to Data-Driven Quality Improvement in an Evolving Health Care System, a conference sponsored by the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care (Peer Review Organization), May 13, 1994.

Douglas R. Murray. "Information for State Health Policy: The Priorities for Arkansas," invited presentation to Joint Interim Committee on Public Health, Welfare, and Labor of the Arkansas State Legislature, May 19, 1994.

### **Grantee Websites**

[www.healthyarkansas.com](http://www.healthyarkansas.com) is the website of the Arkansas Department of Health.