

December 2010

Certification Corner

Q: I read that only two states will be introducing certification bills in 2011. Although our state is just at the beginning stages (and we haven't yet met with our elected officials) we were really hoping to introduce legislation sometime within the next year. Why should we wait?

A: It is extremely important to spend time educating the elected officials on the certification issue before introducing a bill. When a bill is introduced, it has the name of the prime sponsor of the bill, along with co-sponsors. We want the bill to have a number of co-sponsors' names on it to show how much support our bill has; without taking the time to educate the legislators beforehand, we cannot achieve that goal. Also, legislators have certain organizations that they seek out and ask their advice on regarding legislation. If the majority of legislators do not know who IAHCSSM is or understand the legislation, it could be detrimental to our bill to have these other organizations giving advice to the legislators. I am certain that other organizations will weigh in on our bill to the legislators, but we want to make sure that we have presented our arguments and set the tone on the legislation before other organizations have that chance.

Additionally, it is equally important to notify allies and adversaries that we will be introducing a bill. It is my goal to try to garner as much support from other organizations (our allies) before introducing a bill. It is much easier to fight for a bill with a group of supporters behind us. There are certain organizations that will oppose our bill no matter what changes we make to it. Our biggest opponent will be the state hospital associations, and I anticipate that they will argue that our bill will cost them more money. Hospital associations have very good relationships with their elected officials because they have been lobbying state legislatures for years. Sometimes, adversaries become adversaries simply because they were not notified of the intention of introducing a bill that affects them. That may sound crazy but, unfortunately, it is true.

I know that members are excited about getting started with legislation in their respective states, and that they probably do not want to hear that they have to wait a couple of years; however, it will be much more beneficial to us in the end if we lay the foundation for introducing a bill instead of jumping in head-first and introducing a bill prematurely.

Q: We reviewed the new IAHCSSM Government Affairs web pages and noticed the new legislative map indicating the different stages of the legislative process for certification requirements. Our state is currently blue. How do we advance to yellow or orange?

A: Blue states have not started the legislative process for certification, whereas yellow states are in the planning stage, and orange states have or will be introducing legislation in 2011. The two states that will introduce legislation in 2011 are New York and Pennsylvania. New York introduced a bill in 2010 that did not pass; therefore, legislators know the issue and our members. Pennsylvania secured a bill sponsor this past fall with the help of one of our members, Michele DeMeo. Representative Gingrich is a strong sponsor and will do everything in her power to educate her colleagues on the issue. For these two states, everything has fallen into place to introduce a bill.



There are seven states that are in the planning stages – Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Colorado, Ohio, and Maryland. This was determined by speaking with members in these states, along with IAHCSSM staff, and gauging support to start a grassroots plan of attack. During 2011, I will help members in these states develop a plan to meet with legislators in their districts and educate them on the certification issue. Additionally, we will be sending out emails asking our members if they would like to assist in this process. By Fall 2011, the National Government Affairs Committee (with my input) will recommend to Betty Hanna, Bruce Bird, and Lisa Huber the states it believes are in line for legislation introduction in 2012.

As you will notice on the legislative map, there is only one “pink” state, and this is New Jersey. This color indicates that certification is required in that state. If you live in any of the states that are yellow or orange, we need your help. Check your email in 2011 for legislative action alerts.

Have a state certification- or legislative-related question that you'd like answered in an upcoming issue? Email IAHCSSM's Government Affairs Director at jo@jahcssmm.org.