

RCW 43.70.460 Retired primary and specialty care provider liability malpractice insurance—Program authorized. (1) The department may establish a program to purchase and maintain liability malpractice insurance for retired primary and specialty care providers who provide health care services to low-income patients. The following conditions apply to the program:

(a) Health care services shall be provided at clinics serving low-income patients that are public or private tax-exempt corporations or other established practice settings as defined by the department;

(b) Health care services provided at the clinics shall be offered to low-income patients based on their ability to pay;

(c) Retired health care providers providing health care services shall not receive compensation for their services; and

(d) The department shall contract only with a liability insurer authorized to offer liability malpractice insurance in the state.

(e) Specialists in this program will be limited to those whose malpractice insurance premiums are comparable to primary care providers.

(2) This section and RCW 43.70.470 shall not be interpreted to require a liability insurer to provide coverage to a health care provider should the insurer determine that coverage should not be offered to a health care provider because of past claims experience or for other appropriate reasons.

(3) The state and its employees who operate the program shall be immune from any civil or criminal action involving claims against clinics or health care providers that provided health care services under this section and RCW 43.70.470. This protection of immunity shall not extend to any clinic or health care provider participating in the program.

(4) The department may monitor the claims experience of retired health care providers covered by liability insurers contracting with the department.

(5) The department may provide liability insurance under chapter 113, Laws of 1992 only to the extent funds are provided for this purpose by the legislature. If there are insufficient funds to support all applications for liability insurance coverage, priority shall be given to those retired health care providers working at clinics operated by public or private tax-exempt corporations rather than clinics operated by for-profit corporations. [2005 c 156 s 1; 2004 c 184 s 1; 1993 c 492 s 276; 1992 c 113 s 2.]

Finding—1993 c 492: See note following RCW 28B.115.080.

Findings—Intent—1993 c 492: See notes following RCW 43.20.050.

Short title—Savings—Reservation of legislative power—Effective dates—1993 c 492: See RCW 43.72.910 through 43.72.915.

Legislative declaration—1992 c 113: "There are a number of retired physicians who wish to provide, or are providing, health care services to low-income patients without compensation. However, the cost of obtaining malpractice insurance is a burden that is deterring them from donating their time and services in treating the health problems of the poor. The necessity of maintaining malpractice insurance for those in practice is a significant reality in today's litigious society.

A program to alleviate the onerous costs of malpractice insurance for retired physicians providing uncompensated health care services to low-income patients will encourage philanthropy and augment state resources in providing for the health care needs of those who have no access to basic health care services.

An estimated sixteen percent of the nonelderly population do not have health insurance and lack access to even basic health care services. This is especially problematic for low-income persons who are young and who are either unemployed or have entry-level jobs without health care benefits. The majority of the uninsured, however, are working adults, and some twenty-nine percent are children.

The legislature declares that this act will increase the availability of primary care to low-income persons and is in the interest of the public health and safety." [1992 c 113 s 1.]