The Ruckelshaus Center is currently assessing opportunities to expand its services in the health care sector. Health care reform has complicated policy debate and challenges that affect a wide variety of stakeholders across Washington State and the Pacific Northwest. Combining Washington State University and University of Washington expertise and perspective into an effective, university-based neutral third party may help to resolve many policy issues that impact:

- Washington State Health and Human Service Agencies/Departments
- Legislators and Legislative Committees
- Health Care Providers and Associations
- Payers and Plans
- Consumer Advocates
- Unions
- Foundations and Community Partners

Health care policy conflicts are often inflated by differing stakeholder agendas, as well as finite public funding. Health care reform encourages new care delivery, coordination and payment methods, and a need for collaborative innovation. The Center may be able to provide a neutral forum that can help overcome historic differences, improve civil discourse and achieve collaborative policy development. Some topical examples include:

- Integration and streamlining of physical and behavioral health services
- Standardization of performance and outcomes measures
- Preventative health and wellness initiatives
- Environmental and public health conflicts
- Population health management
- State Innovation Model Initiatives
- Development of Value-Based Purchasing policies
- Task force/stakeholder workgroup facilitation

The Center envisions a future in which governmental leaders, policy makers, stakeholders and citizens in the state of Washington and the Pacific Northwest routinely employ the tools of collaborative decision making to design, conduct and implement successful public policy processes.
Examples of the Center’s health policy projects include:

**Nurse Staffing**
The Center teamed with the University of Washington’s School of Nursing to assist in resolving long-standing disagreements concerning hospital staffing decisions. Stakeholder concerns included the effects of nurse staffing levels in hospitals, patient safety, costs and working conditions for nurses.

**Eldercare Workforce**
The Center is currently teaming with the University of Washington’s Health Policy Center on Phase One of an Eldercare Workforce engagement, to examine workforce capacity in Washington State, including mapping the issues. Future phases may include convening stakeholders statewide to listen and learn from one another about areas of conflict and consensus, and facilitate the creation of a Washington State Eldercare Workforce Alliance.

Kevin Harris, a national health care public policy expert is currently assessing the Ruckelshaus Center’s capacity and capability to expand its involvement in collaborative health care policy development. He is working throughout 2014 to meet with key stakeholders and policy makers to examine the Center’s potential role.

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