

WSSC 2009 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

HEALTH CARE

PRINCIPLES

Health care is more than a commodity; it is a basic human right, an essential safeguard of human life and dignity. We believe our people's healthcare should not depend on where they work, how much their parents earn, or where they live. Our constant teaching that each human life must be protected and human dignity promoted leads us to insist that all people have a right to healthcare.

Framework for Comprehensive Healthcare Reform, USCCB, 1993

Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right. With an estimated 47 million Americans lacking health care coverage, it is also an urgent national priority.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

In the United States, the need for health care reform has been driven by access, affordability, efficiency, quality and sustainability issues. With the new federal administration there will be a fresh look at universal access to health care, which may direct how the state will look at health care reform.

It is estimated that well over half a million people in Washington do not have health insurance and these numbers are rising. Many working adults cannot afford to pay the rising cost of insuring themselves and their children. Children without health coverage are generally less healthy because their parents are more likely to postpone needed health care. This places a major strain on those who provide uncompensated care.

The successful "Cover All Kids" legislation, re-named "Apple Health," requires all uninsured children to be covered by 2010. Advocates will be working to achieve full implementation of this law by urging the state to remove barriers that prevent eligible children from obtaining coverage. Legislation will include outreach to ensure that all eligible children can access health care.

The State's dismal vaccination rates have sparked the need to develop a campaign to increase the number of children who are vaccinated. Public health programs are in jeopardy due to the economic downturn, yet they play an important role in vaccination, chronic disease management, and initiatives related to obesity, cancer prevention, and healthy lifestyles. In addition, funding is in jeopardy for refugees and immigrants requiring interpretative services as well as mental health services for immigrant children under the children's health program.

There is growing awareness that barriers to mental health services exist in Washington, particularly for veterans, children, the homeless, and for those involved in the criminal justice system. It is important to allow the mental health system the flexibility to ensure access for those in need of services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WSSC SUPPORTS:

- Providing access to health care for all
- Implementing the "Cover All Kids" law, including outreach and education
- Improving the State's vaccination rates
- Maintaining local public health programs
- Providing health care services for refugees and immigrants
- Improving access to mental health services