

2010 Iowa Legislative Priorities

As the State of Iowa continues to make difficult budget decisions, we encourage the State to continue its commitment to those most in need of assistance, particularly in these financially challenging times. The legislative priorities outlined below demonstrate successful State investments with proven, substantial benefits to the uninsured and underserved.

Continue Support for the Community Health Center Incubator Program

The State's investment in the CHC Incubator Program has made an undeniable difference in increasing access to affordable primary and preventive health care. This program provides start-up funding for communities seeking to establish a federally-funded health center.

Program Accomplishments

Crescent Community Health Center in Dubuque was the first successful recipient of the program. With the State's initial investment, Crescent was able to open its doors in 2006 and provided much needed care to the uninsured and underserved before it secured federal funding in 2007. With the State's initial investment, the health center was able to leverage more than \$1 million in local, state, and federal support. Today, the health center provides primary medical and dental care to more than 4,000 underserved and uninsured patients.

The current CHC Incubator recipient, Greater Sioux Community Health Center in Sioux Center, began providing services in July 2008 and currently provides care to more than 1,200 patients, 73% of whom are uninsured. The number of new patients (particularly uninsured patients) as the center continues to rise each month.

It is very likely that federal health care reform will include funding to establish new health center sites. Continuing to support the CHC Incubator Program provides Iowa communities with a strong foundation to take advantage of this opportunity.

Continue Support for the Iowa Collaborative Safety Net Provider Network

Since 2005, the Iowa Collaborative Safety Net Provider Network's efforts have brought together the state's community health centers, free clinics, rural health clinics, family planning agencies, maternal and child health clinics, and local boards of health to address common challenges.

Program Accomplishments

The Network continues to gain momentum as pilot programs move from planning and development to implementation. Last year, State funding through the Network supported safety net providers and programs across the state.

- Grants were made to organizations in Cedar Falls, Cedar Rapids, and Des Moines to create and implement **specialty care referral networks**. More than 860 Iowans were provided with referrals.
- Funding was provided to Dubuque, Sioux City, Calhoun County, Dallas County, and Polk County for **medical home capacity building grants**.
- Support for the State's **Volunteer Health Care Provider Program**, which offers legal protection to health care providers and free clinics where health care providers serve. Currently, there are 610 providers (e.g., physicians, nurses, social workers, emergency medical technicians) enrolled in the program.

- **Direct funding** to free clinics, rural health clinics, and family planning agencies to purchase equipment, advance clinics' electronic medical records projects, and/or purchase clinic supplies/medications. This funding impacted more than 6,200 patients across the state.
- **Drug Donation Repository Program** administered through the Iowa Prescription Drug Corporation. Since the program's implementation in March 2007, nearly 1.5 million units of drugs have been donated with a value of over \$1.9 million, resulting in 3,899 patients receiving medication free of charge.

Continue Support for Tobacco Cessation Program for Underserved Iowans

Since 2007, Iowa's community health centers have partnered with the Iowa Department of Public Health to provide free tobacco cessation services to underserved Iowans. During the last fiscal year alone:

- Nearly 3,300 patients enrolled in the program.
- 11,000 two-week courses were provided (including counseling and medication).
- 82% of participants were uninsured.
- Quit rates for participants in the program align with similar programs nationwide, especially considering the more complex patient population CHCs serve. The 12-month quit rate for CHC patients is even greater at 23%.

Expand the IowaCare Program

Thousands of Iowans currently rely on IowaCare, the State's Medicaid Expansion program, for primary and specialty care services. However, the program limits access to care through Broadlawns Medical Center in Des Moines (for Polk County residents) and the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City (for all other Iowa residents). This limitation can be a significant burden to patients who must travel hundreds of miles to access these services.

As the State prepares to apply for a renewal of this CMS waiver, we encourage the State to expand the program to allow for local primary care access for IowaCare patients through the state's 13 community health centers.