

Health Reform in Iowa: The Next Step
“Shared Responsibility”
Child Health Coverage-Individual Mandate

Proposal – Iowa requires all children to have proof of health care coverage, either by insurance (individual, employer based, or hawk-i) or Medicaid.

- I. Pre hawk-i
 - 1994 – Child Uninsured Rate – 12.3% (93,000 children)
 - Highest rate of contiguous states
 - State belief – “few uninsured children, parents would not sign them up, parents would not maintain enrollment.”

- II. Individual Mandate
 - Massachusetts and possibly, California model
 - 1994 Iowa Health Reform Council Recommendation
 - Similar to requirement for auto insurance for adults and immunizations and seatbelts for children.
 - Consistent with shared responsibility theme
 - Discussed at 2004 “Expert Forum on Coverage of All Kids”

- III. Necessary Pre-Steps
 - Adequate individual insurance option for children above eligibility requirements for hawk-i
 - Option for children with no proof of citizenship or legal status in United States.
 - State promise of hawk-i coverage, despite Federal potential limits

- IV. Mechanism
 - At medical provider visit, day care registration, and school registration, parents are asked if their child has proof of health care coverage. If they indicate their child does not have coverage then the parents are given information as to acquiring such coverage and offered help in obtaining coverage. Some time thereafter, the parents are sent a registered letter once again asking if their child has proof of health care coverage.

V. Thoughts Regarding Overall Vision

- Only way to get to Universal Health Care Coverage is Shared Responsibility (patients/citizens, health providers, employers and government).
- With this provision, Iowa has reached Universal Coverage for individuals from birth – 19 and 65 – death.
- For now, Iowa can afford only modest efforts to help adults in the 19-65 range. Such efforts should include continued emphasis on employer-based insurance.
- Shared responsibility concept should include, as does Massachusetts, allowing parents to keep their children on parents' health insurance policies until the age of 26 for an appropriate actuarial cost.
- Like the Federal S-CHIP funding, which allowed for hawk-I, the political realities of this year including the tobacco tax increase make this year unique. If Iowa wishes to take significant action on Health Reform, this is the year to do it. It would once again place Iowa on the national stage.