

Access to Health Care Position Statement

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities supports the position that all people, regardless of their disability, age, or ability to pay, should have access to affordable, comprehensive health care. The Council supports healthcare initiatives and efforts to increase the access and affordability of health insurance for everyone.

The Council supports the expansion of Medicaid for Texas under the federal Affordable Care Act. Texas has the biggest coverage gap in the country, with 766,000 residents ineligible for Medicaid and also ineligible for premium subsidies to offset the cost of private coverage in the exchange. The Council supports the position that in any consideration of changes to the healthcare financing and delivery system in the United States, the well-being of the individual must be the highest priority. The Council strongly supports the reform measures and principles set forth in this statement as providing individuals consistent access to patient centered, timely, unencumbered, affordable and appropriate health care and universal coverage while maintaining physicians as an integral component to providing the highest quality treatment.

The Council supports the position that as policymakers consider healthcare reforms they should:

- Ensure individuals are empowered to control and decide how their own healthcare dollars are spent;
- Ensure unencumbered access to specialty care;
- Make healthcare coverage more affordable;
- Improve value and increase quality in our healthcare system;
- Extend both coverage and access to the uninsured and under-insured;
- Avoid establishing new unsustainable programs;
- Provide comprehensive, culturally and linguistically appropriate behavioral and mental health services and supports;
- Provide services in the context of a patient centered medical home, where the clinician works in partnership with the individual and/or family to ensure that all medical and nonmedical needs of the person are met;

- Ensure children and adults with behavioral and/or mental health concerns have access to screening, diagnosis and treatment that is not subject to arbitrary limits on coverage and integrated into the broader healthcare system;
- Ensure that people with disabilities of all ages and their families have access to health care that responds to their needs over their lifetimes, and provides continuity of care that helps treat and prevent chronic conditions;
- Ensure that people with disabilities and their families receive comprehensive health, rehabilitation, habilitation, and long term support services provided on the basis of individual need, preference, and choice;
- Ensure that people with disabilities and their families have equitable and affordable access to health coverage programs are not burdened with disproportionate costs.

The Council is concerned about proposals to block grant Medicaid because people with disabilities are especially vulnerable to reductions in Medicaid spending since they typically require more health services and long term supports. Reforms are necessary to strengthen the current Medicaid program so that it provides accessible, high-quality healthcare services to people with disabilities enrolled in the program; with changes that include, but are not limited to, evidence-based practices and payment structures that attract providers.

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