



The Forum is a coalition of doctors, hospitals, health plans and business that was founded in 1997 to improve the health care financing and delivery system.

Basic Health Plan: a Safety Net for the Working Poor

The Forum is committed to achieving a system that provides all state residents with access to coverage and access to care, promotes value, and restrains costs. Our current economic crisis presents us with challenges and opportunities to make sure that the care we deliver is effective and that we preserve coverage for as many people as possible.

The Governor's proposed cuts in health care would result in many of our most vulnerable citizens losing coverage. Already, enrollment in the state's Basic Health Plan (BHP) is decreasing as only one new enrollee is added for every two who leave the program. And the budget proposal for the next biennium would reduce BHP spending by 42%.

The state is expected to receive more than \$2B from the federal stimulus plan over the next two years. This money should be used as it's intended: for health, not for the gap in the general fund.

The Basic Health Plan has played an important role in extending the safety net to provide coverage to many low income people who can't afford to purchase coverage on their own and don't qualify for Medicaid.

According to the state-commissioned study by Mathematika:

- "Health insurance leads to better outcomes when it is affordable and helps consumers to use health care appropriately. Washington state should consider measures that:
 - Encourage, if not require, health insurance coverage of services that are strongly linked to better health outcomes—including preventive and screening services, drug benefits, and mental health services.
 - Maintain and expand efforts to ensure widespread and continuous coverage, promoting continuity of care and reducing disparities in health care among the population.

When individuals don't have health coverage, they seek help when their conditions worsen from hospital emergency departments. That means we're treating people when they're sicker and we're treating them in an expensive setting that is not geared toward chronic disease management or prevention.

The Basic Health Plan should not fall victim to budget cuts, especially now, when it's needed more than ever.



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Coverage for low income workers

- Four out of five of the uninsured are in working families
- Low income workers are less likely to be offered coverage through their jobs
- The uninsured are less likely to receive preventive care than those with insurance and are more likely to be hospitalized for conditions that could have been avoided

SOURCES: KCMU and Urban Institute analysis, March 2005 Current Population Survey. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention