

20-20 PERFECT the VISION

Health Care for Mississippians

**Expanding coverage! Is the state not experiencing a revenue shortfall?
Aren't health care costs already exceeding available funding?**

A resounding "yes" is the answer to both questions. However, expanding coverage is one of the few immediate steps state leadership can take to begin to control health care cost and reduce demand on available revenue.

Data compiled by the Census Bureau documents Mississippians without insurance at all age and income levels. Uninsured Mississippians work alongside their insured co-workers, worship with the insured members of their congregations, and send their children to school with the children of their insured neighbors.

Adding to the *uninsured* population is an unknown number of *underinsured* individuals – men, women and children participating in a paid health plan but still lacking the coverage necessary to access needed health care.

DECISIONS . . . DECISIONS . . . DECISIONS

For some, access to health care is about the quality of life. For others, it is literally a matter of life or death. If money were no object, a decision-making process would not be necessary. In reality, the cost of needed health care continues to outpace the availability of funds. The gap is greater when revenues are limited, yet the gap remains even in the best of times.

Why? The obvious answer is increasing cost.

Prescription drug costs have sky-rocketed, the life span of the average Mississippian has increased, and advances in medical care make it possible to treat illnesses that once meant swift and certain death.

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An equally obvious, but not often recognized, answer is that most funding is directed toward treatment, not prevention and wellness.

MISSISSIPPI NEEDS A PLAN

Mississippi needs a plan – not a two-year plan or a four-year plan but a plan that starts in the year 2002 and extends until 2020 – a time span long enough to establish a new generation of healthy Mississippians.

SOLUTIONS FOR THE UNINSURED – THE 20-20 VISION

By making a commitment to implement a twenty-point plan by the year 2020, Mississippi can contain current health care cost and in the process reduce long-term cost.

The 20-20 Vision expands coverage to all Mississippians by coordinating public and

private health care plans, making strategic investments, increasing the health care workforce, and expanding consumer services.

Within the following five broad categories are the twenty points of the 20-20 Vision – points that address critical areas of intervention needed to implement a broad preventive health care strategy.

EXCELLENT PRE-NATAL CARE FOR ALL PREGNANT WOMEN.

- 1.** Bridge the gap between Medicaid and CHIP by expanding coverage under Medicaid for pregnant women up to 200% FPL.
- 2.** Expand beyond 200% FPL with a sliding fee scale for both premiums and health care services.

PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE AND ROUTINE WELL CARE FOR ALL CHILDREN.

- 3.** Expand CHIP income eligibility and implement a sliding fee scale for both premiums and health care services.
- 4.** Establish supplemental coverage for gaps in private coverage such as vision and dental health care for children up to the CHIP income eligibility limit.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR ALL ADULTS.

- 5.** Increase the period of post-natal care provided under Medicaid.
- 6.** Expand Medicaid to include continuously enrolled college students that “age-off” (c5f 0 g 0

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15. Evaluate the potential of increasing the number of health care providers accepting CHIP and Medicaid patients by participating in a fee-based system of enhanced and optional services.

16. Pursue disproportionate share formulas for other health care providers.

INCREASED AVAILABILITY OF QUALIFIED HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS.

17. Expand school-based services such as the school nurse program.

18. Expand scholarship programs to include all needed health care service providers.

Wellness through consumer education and assistance services.

19. Establish public education campaigns to increase wellness by reducing high-risk behavior.

20. Expand consumer assistance services to ensure prompt and accurate resolution of issues of denial and billing.

SETTING THE BENCHMARKS

A coordinated set of benchmarks must be established for the eighteen-year period covered by the plan to ensure available resources are used in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

For example, the mothers of eligible newborns are currently covered for two months following childbirth. Expanding this coverage to a full

year beginning in 2002 (Point 5) would be the first benchmark. Adding an additional year annually would cover mothers of children first covered in 2002 throughout their eighteen years of eligibility ending in 2020. Such a process allows the projected savings resulting from increased wellness to be reinvested annually to expand coverage and promote increased wellness and long-term cost reduction.

SUPPORTING THE VISION WITH SYSTEM CHANGE

References to system change have been purposefully omitted from the twenty-step plan. System change does not fuel a vision. Rather,

The twenty elements of the 20-20 Vision represent the combined vision of hundreds of Mississippians.

system change is fueled by a vision. Able administrators will recognize what is needed to implement the 20-20 Vision. Responsible

leadership requires the necessary resources be provided. The only effective strategy is one that combines immediate action with long-term strategies.

VISION TO REALITY

The twenty elements of the 20-20 Vision represent the combined vision of hundreds of Mississippians. For the Vision to become reality, many more must become involved in the vision setting process. The proposed Health Care Coordinating Council (Point 13) addresses the inclusive process needed to explore service delivery and financing strategies, establish benchmarks and evaluate results.

Over the eighteen-year process, many changes will take place – the one constant will be the need for preventive health care for all Mississippians.

Visit healthmys.org after January 15, 2002 to follow the progress of the 20-20 Vision.

THE VISIONARIES

Over 500 Mississippians attended community forums held in nine communities during November and December 2001. The Forum on Children and Families and the Mississippi Health Advocacy Program, co-sponsors of the forums, were assisted by local host organizations in each of the communities: Warren-Yazoo Mental Health Service, Mississippi Coalition for Community Welfare, Forrest General Hospital, DeSoto Family Resource Center, Catch Kids, Inc., Washington County Anti-drop Task Force, Miami Wellness Center, Delta Community Partners in Care, and Coastal Family Health Center.

The elements of the 20-20 Vision were defined during these forums. Appreciation is expressed to the parents, legislators, community leaders, social service providers, educators, child care and Head Start providers, insurance executives, educators, health care providers, state agency personnel and citizens who contributed their time and interest to the issues of expanding coverage.

The participation of the Office of the Governor was invaluable to the process and a particular note of appreciation is expressed to Governor Ronnie Musgrove, Division of Medicaid Executive Director Rica Lewis-Payton, and their representatives who attended all nine of the forums.

The Mississippi Forum on Children and Families

(MFCF) provides community resource development through information, education, and training services.

The work of MFCF seeks to improve the lives of Mississippi children and their families, particularly those with the greatest need. Activity is focused in the areas of early childhood education and care, child health, youth development, employment preparation, and family support. A private, non-profit organization, MFCF was established in 1992 and is funded through grants from foundations, corporations and public agencies.

737 North President St. • Jackson, MS 39202 • www.mfcf.org

The Mississippi Health Advocacy Program

(MHAP) combines research, analysis, and grass-roots organizing to improve health policies, practices and funding in Mississippi, especially in support of the state's poor and underserved people. Established in 1992 by a grant from the Sisters of Mercy Health System, MHAP is a resource for church groups, concerned citizens and professionals who are working toward comprehensive solutions to health problems in our state.

P.O. Box 11837 • Jackson, MS 39283 • www.mhap.org

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