

Vermont Citizens Campaign For Health

Statement of Principles *Goals for Health Care Reform*

VCCH Principles

VCCH believes that universal access to health care is a public good. A just, moral society values its citizens' health care needs and guarantees health security to all.

Vermont's Health Care Crisis

VCCH recognizes that 63,000 Vermonters are currently uninsured, 100,000 are underinsured and many of those with insurance are unable to afford the double-digit increases in their annual health insurance premiums. We are in a protracted health care crisis that is threatening the health, emotional welfare and economic stability of everyone in our state. Without immediate systemic reform, the crisis will only worsen.

The Solution: A Health Care Plan That Covers All Vermonters

VCCH supports the creation of a statewide health care plan that is comprehensive, affordable for all, with a common benefits package that includes transparent administrative policies and tough cost containment strategies.

VCCH urges our legislators to be bold, to avoid the false prudence of incrementalism and to enact a comprehensive, universal plan now. We ask our legislators to show the courage of their convictions by creating a comprehensive health care system that covers all the essential needs of Vermont residents and that would be subject to regular review, negotiation, modification. Such a system would be set up by our elected representatives and would be accountable to the public.

In such a plan, all Vermont residents of all ages - insured or uninsured, employed or unemployed - would have access to all essential health care services: primary, preventive and hospital care.

The health care delivery system will remain, as it is now, a mix of public and private providers.

Health Care Financing Must Be Fairly Shared

Health care must be financed by broad-based taxes that are sufficient, equitable, fair, and sustainable. THESE TAXES WILL REPLACE EXISTING HEALTH CARE PREMIUMS AND ARE EXPECTED TO REDUCE OVERALL COSTS FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES. Such cost-sharing devices as user fees, co-pays, deductibles may apply to all except preventive care.

Health Care Costs Must Be Contained

The goal of a Vermont health care system is to provide quality care for all and to put measures in place that slow the rate of growth in health care costs.

- ❑ Payment for services under Vermont's health care system must be administered by a single body in order to reduce duplication of services and paper work, resulting in dramatically reduced administrative costs.
- ❑ The administering body will negotiate with providers to set adequate fee schedules for health services and global hospital budgets.
- ❑ Health care providers will have access to purchasing pools to lower the cost of equipment, supplies and prescription drugs.
- ❑ The system will seek to educate Vermonters in healthy lifestyles.
- ❑ The system will encourage the utilization of local health centers and primary care providers.
- ❑ The system will encourage best practices among all providers to reduce unnecessary treatments and procedures.

Vermonters Must Control Their Health Care Plan

To integrate care and control costs, we support the creation of community health boards composed of health care professionals, institutions, and community members. These regional boards will assess, prioritize and define community health needs.

Vermont's Health Care Professionals Must Be Fairly Paid

The administrator of Vermont's plan will negotiate with hospitals, health care professionals, and groups of health care professionals to establish the amount of payment for health care services provided by the state plan. The amount must be sufficient to provide reasonable access to health services and be based on an equitable cost-based provider reimbursement system.

The administration will negotiate with each hospital to establish global hospital budgets and will negotiate a contract including payment methods and amounts with any out-of-state hospitals that regularly treat Vermonters.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF VERMONT'S HEALTH CARE CRISIS AND HOW WE CAN SOLVE IT

- ✦ **Health care in Vermont costs too much, buys too little and excludes too many.**
- ✦ **Vermont must make health care a public responsibility** just as it does with education, public safety and highways. Universal healthcare is a public good -- everyone benefits!
- ✦ **Vermont needs a universal, comprehensive health insurance system** that is publicly financed, accountable to the citizens of VT and includes tough cost containment strategies.
- ✦ **Payment for services under Vermont's publicly funded health care system must be administered by a single body.**
- ✦ **Health care must be financed by broad-based taxes** that are sufficient, equitable, fair and sustainable. Such taxes will replace existing health care premiums and most citizens and businesses will see their overall healthcare costs go down.
- ✦ **The health care delivery system will remain, as it is now,** a mix of public and private providers.
- ✦ **Our legislators must act boldly and courageously** to create a comprehensive, universal system now. Health care must be separated from employment. Incremental or piece-meal approaches will not solve VT's crisis.
- ✦ **All of these proposed changes will be implemented by 2010** as the various pieces are put into place.