



Access to Care

Preserve Access to Care for More Than 700,000 Washingtonians

In Washington State, more than 700,000 low- and moderate-income individuals have gained health insurance through Medicaid expansion or the premium subsidies on the Health Benefits Exchange. As a result, the uninsured rate is at an all-time low. WSHA strongly supports maintaining access to health care and health insurance for these newly covered people. For many people, this is the first time they have had health insurance and the ability to access ongoing health services. Access to comprehensive health services, not just an emergency room, is a critical reason WSHA strongly supports maintaining access to health care and health insurance for these newly covered people.

Serving patients

In order to provide comprehensive care to the newly insured, hospital clinics have added important services, such as primary care, specialty care, and mental health. Having more insured patients helps stabilize health care services so hospitals and health systems can serve their communities into the future.

Hospitals helped pay for coverage

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) coverage expansions are funded in part by cuts to Medicare and Disproportionate Share Hospital payments – a total of about \$3.5 billion over ten years in Washington State alone. The deal struck in the ACA acknowledged that reductions in charity care and bad debt would help balance out these cuts.

While charity care and bad debt are decreasing, hospitals have seen significant increases in Medicaid payments that do not pay the cost of providing care in addition to patients unable to cover their portion of the large cost-sharing requirements of many Exchange plans. Despite these complex financing arrangements, hospitals continue to support increased access to coverage and care.



People across the state have gained access to care as a result of Medicaid expansion and the Health Benefit Exchange.

Only when its patients are accessing care in the appropriate setting and with stable reimbursement can hospitals and the health care system create innovations that lead to better outcomes at lower costs. Both the federal government and Washington State will have important decisions to make moving forward; maintaining access to care should be the top goal.

Finally, the expansions have provided important funding to the Washington State budget for health care services across the state, which has allowed the state to spend valuable resources on additional infrastructure and services to support Washington communities. The federal government and the legislature should maintain this funding for health care services into the future.

WSHA position

The legislature should scrutinize any changes at the federal level before making decisions impacting newly covered individuals. At every decision point, Washington State should choose the path that maximizes access to care and funding for health care services. WSHA strongly supports ensuring that our state continues to move forward on access to care and coverage for low- and moderate-income individuals.