

Washington State
Developmental Disabilities Council
Helping people with developmental disabilities build better lives

Policy No. 101

Health Care

Adopted: January 24, 1992

Revised: November 1, 2005

The Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council finds that:

As many as 40 million Americans may not have health insurance;

There may be as many as 785,000 Washington State residents who lack health insurance; many of whom are employed or are children;

As many as one person out of four puts off needed medical treatment because of concern over cost;

The United States has the highest health care costs of any developed nation costs, which now exceed 12% of the national gross national product;

Small businesses have a difficult time providing health insurance for their employees;

20% of the Washington State budget now goes for health care costs;

Although prevention and early intervention are effective means of avoiding high cost medical interventions and of assuring better outcomes, they are not being fully implemented;

Even with health insurance families with a member with disabilities are three to four times more likely to have out of pocket costs and these costs are escalating at a rate which exceeds inflation;

People with disabilities may be precluded from accessing health insurance because of medical underwriting practices and specifically a refusal to insure those with "pre-existing conditions;"

People are unwilling to change employment because of fears of losing their health insurance, particularly if they have a family member with disabilities with significant health care needs;

Lifetime caps are simply insufficient for some people with severe or multiple disabilities.

The following principles are the Council policy on health care:

Comprehensive health care is the right of every person in Washington State; all people, regardless of personal or familial circumstance, should have access to comprehensive appropriate health care services with a choice of providers. These services should be a seamless array of life-long related services delivered by a range of practitioners;

No one should be denied access to needed health services or health care insurance because of disability or other pre-existing conditions. Access should be uniform across the state and portable from job to job;

Needed services should be available to each individual unrestricted by financial barriers; health care services should be affordable to every citizen with individual and family costs proportionate to income;

Specialized health care services for those with disabilities must be components of the health care service system, including vision, hearing, and dental services, maintenance therapies, assistive devices, durable medical equipment, personal assistance and care, and disposable medical supplies;

Consumers should be able to expect effective, flexible, and innovative health care services;

Consumers should be supported in assuming responsibility for maintaining and improving their own health through appropriate behaviors and preventive measures;

Wellness, prevention, early intervention services, and research and development are critical to good health and must be implemented in a comprehensive and thoughtful manner;

Long-term health care needs of those with functional disabilities must be recognized through comprehensive individual planning and the inclusion of long-term habilitation, rehabilitation, and mental health services as components of the health care service system;

Health care professionals must have education and ongoing training which focuses on people with developmental disabilities in order to meet their specialized health needs;

Reform must include control of administrative, bureaucratic, and professional costs, as well as, planning and coordination of capital resource utilization.

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