

Health Reform: Navigating the Overload of Information



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Given the complex nature of the current healthcare crisis and the chaos of multiple agendas and initiatives at the state and national level, it is imperative that we become informed and equipped to participate in the effort to reform our healthcare system. Nurses comprise the largest body of healthcare professionals in the United States and, as professional nurse leaders, we must maintain knowledge on state and national initiatives to position ourselves as informed healthcare advocates to advance the welfare of those we serve (www.bls.gov, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook: Registered Nurses, 2009).

The information available is vast and quickly evolving making it difficult to evaluate and utilize. ACNL's Health Policy Committee has developed this document with links to key websites as a foundation for ACNL members' involvement in healthcare reform. Each of these links connects you with details regarding the current issues in national and state healthcare and the various proposed solutions.

We hope that our members are engaged in reform dialogue as well as action.

American Nurses Association (ANA)

The American Nurses Association offers a policy document, Health System Reform Agenda (2008), which outlines what the organization sees as the essential components to consider in the reform of the U.S. healthcare system. The components include access, cost, quality and workforce.

www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/HealthcareandPolicyIssues/HealthSystemReform/Agenda/ANAsHealthSystemReformAgenda.aspx
www.nursingworld.org/HSRA08

California Hospital Association (CHA)

CHA has been very involved in health care reform at the state and national level. ACNL's president is a voting member of CHA's Board of Directors, giving nurse

leaders a voice at the CHA table. The CHA website offers frequent updates about health care reform and other key issues

www.calhospital.org

Health Access Foundation California

The Health Access Foundation of California provides a comparison review of national and state health reform initiatives including Senator Baucus's proposals discussed in his White Paper on reform.

[**www.health-access.org**](http://www.health-access.org)

HealthReform.gov

This website, which is managed by The US. Department of Health and Human Services, provides the public with information specific to current health reform including such topics as:

~ Road Blocks to Health Care

~ Health Reform and the Budget

~ The White House Update

~ A Weekly Update from Nancy-Ann DeParle, the Director of the White House Office of Health Reform

~ Join the Discussion on Health Reform- an opportunity for the public to share their stories and ideas

[**www.HealthReform.gov**](http://www.HealthReform.gov)

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

The Kaiser Family Foundation is a non-profit, private foundation whose focus is major health care issues facing the U.S., as well as our country's role in global health policy. The foundation is presented as a non-partisan source of information and analysis on health care issues for the media, the health care community, policymakers and the public. This website offers a side-by-side comparison of the major health care reform proposals, including President Barack Obama's Principles for Health Reform, Senator Baucus's Call to Action Health Reform 2009 Proposal, The Patients' Choice Act of 2009, as well as other proposals that have been formally introduced as legislation, or those that have been offered as principles or white papers. The side-by-side feature allows the reader to choose the proposals and the topics within the proposals that they would like to compare. The information is updated regularly to capture changes in the current proposals as they occur and the major new proposals as they are released.

[**www.healthreform.kff.org**](http://www.healthreform.kff.org)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's mission is to "improve the health and health care of all Americans." The Foundation is currently focused on seven program areas including Building Human Capital- working toward building a nation with a diverse, well trained, leadership and workforce in health care; Childhood Obesity; Health Care Coverage; Pioneer - supports innovative ideas and projects that may lead to breakthroughs in health care; Quality and Equality; and Vulnerable Populations. The Foundation dedicates a portion of its website to health reform which includes a Real Time Policy Analysis; Health Reform Newsroom; Health Reform Blog; The Daily News Digest- a daily update on key aspects of health reform that the reader subscribes to and receives via email; and Health Reform Publications, including the recent publication: Health Reform: The Cost of Failure.

Health Reform: The Cost of Failure

An analysis prepared by the Urban Institute which estimates how coverage and costs would change between now and 2019 if Health Reform is not enacted. The most notable changes include:

- ~ Total individual and family spending on premiums could increase between 46-68%
 - ~ Employer spending on premiums could more than double in the next 10 years, from \$429.8 billion to \$885.1 billion in 2019 leading to fewer Americans being offered coverage by their employer
 - ~ Spending on Government Insurance could double with enrollment increasing by 13.3 million people from current figures
 - ~ Millions more people could be uninsured- up to 66 million Americans (current estimated uninsured is 47 million Americans)
 - ~ The amount of uncompensated care in the health care system could more than double from \$62.1 billion in 2009 to as much as \$141.4 billion in 2019
- The report emphasizes that middle income earners would be the most effected if health reform in not enacted.

www.rwjf.org

The White House - President Barack Obama

President Obama and his Administration have posted a public website dedicated to informing the American People of all major issues, including Health Reform. This website provides regular updates of pending and signed legislation. Since his inception as President the following components of reform have been passed:

- ~ The Children's Health Insurance Reauthorization Act- extends insurance coverage to 4 million additional children
- ~ The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which includes:
 - ~ 65% Cobra subsidy to improve affordability to those who have lost their jobs
 - ~ \$1.9 billion invested in computerized medical records
 - ~ \$1 billion in health care related research
 - ~ \$500 million toward the training of the health workforce including physicians and

nurses

The President is determined to sign a health care reform bill into legislation within the first year of his Presidency.

www.whitehouse.gov

Another link for consideration is the legislative section from the American Case Managers Association.

www.acmaweb.org/legislative.asp

The Imperative for Involvement by Nurses

President Obama has made a commitment to reform healthcare within the year and we as nurses must be informed and ready to lend our voices to these reforms. Nurses, and especially nurse leaders, cannot afford to stand by silently. We must have our elbows on the table of health policy reform and knowledge is the first step to being invited to sit at the table.

The ACNL Health Policy Committee encourages all members to explore these sites and to become educated. It is not the position of ACNL to advocate for a particular initiative or agenda, but to provide members with the resources to make informed decisions and opinions. If you have any comments or suggestions for additional resources, please contact the **Health Policy Committee, c/o ACNL at: info@acnl.org**