



Broward Regional Health Planning Council

2009 Broward County Health Plan

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

November 2009

Access to healthcare has become an important political and social topic across the nation. It can dramatically impact an individual's as well as a community's health status and is affected by a variety of factors including: healthcare costs, health insurance coverage, employment, poverty and transportation.

HEALTHCARE COSTS

Healthcare costs have grown substantially since the 1960s, which has an impact on people, businesses and government. Since the 1960s, healthcare spending has consistently grown faster than the overall economy and is projected to be 17.6% of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 (Kaiser Family Foundation, "Trends in Health Care Costs and Spending," March 2009). The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) estimates the U.S. will spend over \$2.5 trillion on healthcare in 2009 (\$8,160 per U.S. resident).

The rising cost impacts the public through rising out-of-pocket payments, including increased health insurance premiums and cost sharing. Major factors driving the growth include:

Services Intensity. Life spans and chronic illnesses prevalence has increased overtime, which places tremendous demands on the healthcare system, such as an increased need for ongoing illnesses treatment and long-term care services.

Prescription drugs/technology. Costs related to prescription drugs and major advancements in healthcare technology are often considered as major contributors to the rise in health spending. Some analysts believe the

availability of more expensive, state-of-the-art drugs and technology plays a large role in increased healthcare spending because the development costs must be recouped. In addition, this technology generates consumer demand for more costly services, regardless of efficacy and cost-effectiveness.

Aging of the population. Health expenses rise with age. This has become a more prominent concern as the baby boomers age. Some say caring for this large population has raised and will continue to raise healthcare costs. This trend will continue as the baby boomers begin qualifying for Medicare in 2011, resulting in a shift of many costs to the public sector.

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

Health insurance coverage can greatly impact an individual's or family's access to healthcare. As healthcare costs continue to rise, individuals without insurance have an increasingly more difficult time accessing healthcare services. In 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates 21.8 percent of Broward County non-institutionalized civilian residents were uninsured, which is great than 20.83 percent of Floridians and 15.1% of U.S. residents. When compared to Florida and the United States, Broward County also had a higher rate of uninsured for children less than 18 years of age, residents ages 18-64 and resident 65 years of age and older. A recent USA Families report ("The Clock is Ticking: More Americans Losing Health Coverage") estimated that 3,560 persons in Florida could lose health coverage each week from 2008 to 2010.



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Civilian Non-Institutionalized Population Uninsured, by Age Group, 2008

	Broward		Florida	U.S.
	#	%	%	%
Total	404,206	21.8%	20.83%	15.1%
< 18	72,538	17.88%	17.54%	9.93%
18-64	293,856	27.41%	27.42%	19.85%
≥ 65	10,137	4.07%	1.94%	1.41%

Source: 2008 American Community Survey

EMPLOYMENT

In the U.S., health insurance coverage is directly related to employment status since the current healthcare system relies on employer-based health insurance coverage. As a result, an individual's employment status can determine if an individual or his/her family has insurance coverage. Since late 2007, unemployment has been a national concern, with millions of Americans suffering the consequences of unemployment.

Broward has been significantly impacted by unemployment. The unemployment rate in late 2008 (December: 6.8%) far exceeds the previous year (December 2007: 3.9%), reflecting the current economic crisis. As the rate continues to rise (July 2009: 9.5%), more residents will lose their employer-based insurance and begin to rely more on social services and public insurances.

POVERTY

Since healthcare is costly, especially for those with chronic conditions, poverty is a factor that can greatly inhibit an individual's access to healthcare. In 2008, 11.9 percent of "all people" had income below the poverty level, with 8.3 percent of "all families" and 18.0 percent of "families with female householder, no husband present" were below the poverty level. As the number of people living in poverty rises, access to healthcare becomes an increasingly important concern.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a key component in healthcare access, which is further enhanced in difficult economic environments. Lack of transportation to healthcare facilities is frequently cited by patients as a barrier to accessing healthcare services. The community survey of community leaders in the health profession conducted by Broward Regional Health Planning Council supported the need for transportation. When asked "What are the top five barriers that hinder access to health care in your community," 83 percent of the community leaders indicated lack of geographic access/transportation as a least important. Twenty-three percent and 27 percent indicated it was strongly important and highly important, respectively. Broward County's public transportation infrastructure is much smaller in capacity than other large metropolitan areas.

Public Transportation Comparison

	BCT (Broward County)	King County Metro (Seattle, WA)	MDT (Miami-Dade)	Tri-Met (Portland, OR)	Dart (Dallas, TX)	MARTA (Atlanta, GA)
Population	1.7	1.9	2.4	1.2	2.3	1.5
Buses	289	1,413	772	532	559	700
Railcars	0	0	136	81	85	185
Employees	1,016	4,361	4,000+	2,850	3,000	4,729

Source: Broward County Transit Division, 2009

Broward Regional Health Planning Council, Inc. is a non-profit organization committed to delivering health and human service innovations at a national, state and local level through planning, development, implementation, evaluation and organizational capacity building. For additional information, please visit www.BRHPC.org.

The entire **Broward County Health Plan** available online (www.BRHPC.org) or hard copy upon request.