

Principles for Health Reform



Every American should have access to quality, affordable health care. For far too many of us, comprehensive health care has increasingly become a luxury rather than a basic human right. More than 46 million people in the U.S. are uninsured, and 1.7 million Illinois residents—nearly one in seven—lack health insurance. Disparities in the quality of health care—based on economic status, housing stability, language, culture, and geographic location—are common. People living in poverty often have less access to preventive care, limited opportunities to engage in health-promoting activities, and a reduced likelihood of health insurance through employment. These issues, compounded by rising health care costs, leave many vulnerable Americans struggling to meet their health needs.

Access to quality, affordable health care is a human right. It is time to work together on a solution to the health care crisis. As the national debate about health care reform in this country continues, Heartland Alliance supports a uniquely American response that upholds our human rights values, where reform results in increased quality of health care services, reduced health care costs to society and individuals, improved health status of Americans, and elimination of health disparities based on income and race. Meaningful reform must include the following:

- Mental health, substance abuse treatment and oral health care as core components to the plan
- A shift in emphasis toward prevention and wellness
- Promotion of primary care and primary care workforce development
- Adequate pharmaceutical coverage
- Coverage for every man, woman and child
- Coverage that is not dependent on health status (pre-existing conditions)
- Reimbursement of providers for health care interpretation and translation services
- Promotion of electronic health information
- Patient electronic access to information and providers
- Evidence-based and effective practices
- Reimbursement strategies that cover the true cost of providing care and innovation

Heartland Alliance stands ready to support our elected officials in crafting meaningful health care reform that provides quality, affordable care for all.

Through decades of work in Chicago's neighborhoods and throughout the region, **Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights** is an established leader in addressing the health care challenges of underserved populations. We specialize in providing and advocating for accessible, affordable health care services to people who are homeless, immigrants, refugees, the working poor, people experiencing mental illness, and those with substance use issues. Heartland Alliance upholds the principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing and medical care. For more information, please contact Heidi Nelson (773.751.4107, hnelson@heartlandalliance.org) or Gina Guillemette (312.296.1313, gguillemette@heartlandalliance.org), or visit www.heartlandalliance.org.