



Key Implementation and Advocacy Priorities for 2010

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In the early months of 2010, the consumer health advocacy community will (hopefully!) celebrate a tremendous victory and prepare for a challenging transition. We will move from marathon campaigning for national health reform legislation to taking on the enormous tasks of maintaining, strengthening, and implementing the reforms that we worked so hard to pass.

While the timeline for implementation is lengthy, Families USA has outlined some key implementation and advocacy priorities to help define our work in 2010. These are evolving priorities. They are a result of extensive dialogue with our national and state partners, and they are continually refined through ongoing thinking and conversation.

We look forward to working closely with our partners at both the national and state levels to make the most of health reform implementation. This will be a massive task, and collaboration will be essential. Families USA will provide resources, support, and technical assistance to help implement reform on the state and federal levels. Together, we will advance our collective goal of quality, affordable health care for all.

Educate the Public about Health Reform and Avoid Repeal

The final months of the health reform debate have been very difficult and quite partisan. We also know that the legislation signed into law by President Obama will not be perfect. However, it is extremely important that the advocacy community educate the public about the benefits that will come from health reform. It will be imperative to applaud the merits of the final legislation so we can hold on to the victories that we fought so hard to achieve. These tasks will be crucial if we are to thwart efforts to repeal the law that are ideologically and politically driven.

At the same time, we need to monitor and track efforts to systematically spread misinformation about health reform, often through state legislative and ballot activities that challenge components of reform (e.g., attacking the constitutionality of the individual mandate) or overall state participation in reform. We need to centralize the information about these attacks and to partner with state groups in developing strategy and materials to counter them. One important tactic will be advancing a litigation support strategy that is coordinated among state and federal consumer health advocacy organizations.

Influence Key Legislative and Regulatory Opportunities

While many of the reforms in the final health reform bill will not be implemented for years, some provisions will come into effect in 2010. For example, instituting insurance market reforms, closing the Medicare Part D doughnut hole, and setting up the new health insurance exchanges are just a few. Families USA will work in concert with our state-based and national partners to make the most of legislative and regulatory opportunities at both the state and federal levels. It is imperative to ensure that the consumer voice is integral in decision making throughout implementation.

Gear Up for Outreach and Enrollment

With an unprecedented expansion of the Medicaid program, and subsidies to help people buy coverage through health insurance exchanges, there will be millions of people newly eligible for high-quality, affordable coverage. It will be an enormous task to ensure that all of these newly eligible people are aware of the programs and that they get enrolled in them. Identifying best practices, strengthening coalitions, and setting up preliminary structures for enrollment will all start in 2010.

Establish a System for Research and Monitoring

In order to accomplish all of the above goals, advocates at the national and state levels will need indicators that allow us to track improvements (or to see where health reform may not be working effectively). A system of sound research and monitoring can inform messaging work, implementation decisions, and help create a future agenda for improvements. This work will require collaboration among national and state organizations so that uniform indicators and efficient collection processes can be established.

Handle State Budget Crises

Every level of health reform implementation work will be affected by the current budget issues facing states. With states across the country in fiscal distress, cuts to social programs are deep and rampant. Maintaining existing state programs (including cost-sharing levels and eligibility criteria), fighting against additional cuts, and creating new revenue streams will all be top priorities for 2010.

Look to the Future: Building on a Strong Health Reform Foundation

The passage of health reform will significantly expand coverage, radically alter the rules of the insurance marketplace to protect consumers, and begin testing cost-containment initiatives that have the potential to truly bend the health care cost curve. It is an important and strong foundation, but it is neither perfect nor complete. Families USA will work with national and state partners to look forward and develop a longer-term consumer agenda to continue the reform process. Together, we will keep fighting for quality, affordable health care for all.

