



Threats to Our Health Care System

The recession has created an increasing demand from struggling families for state services at the same time that Washington has fewer resources to help them. People in need of health care are increasingly turning to the state for help.

During the last legislative session, the state made major cutbacks in health care services. Tens of thousands of people lost their only access to health insurance through Basic Health. Community mental health services were scaled back. Family planning clinics statewide are closing. Public health programs were stripped down. Hospitals cut vital services such as mental health units, Parkinson's treatment services, and maternity support.



Sarah's Story

Being born with a hole in your heart and cysts on one lung can make growing up really tough. Just ask seven year-old Yakima resident Sarah McIntyre, who still suffers from bronchial asthma. "Sometimes it's hard because I can't breathe and I want to ride my bike," she says.

Regular medical care is the key to a happy and active life for Sarah. With it, her future looks bright, full of all the things she loves to do, like camping, reading, and playing sports. Without it, illness will likely dominate Sarah's life. Sarah qualifies for health care through the Apple Health for Kids program – but she would be one of the nearly 20,000 children to lose health coverage under the Governor's proposal.

The Impacts of the recession

The recession continues to threaten the state's ability to help our neighbors in need. An all-cuts budget would have devastating effects on people who need health care and the providers who care for them. Under the Governor's budget proposal, over 100,000 people would become uninsured overnight. These potential cuts put our economic future and quality of life at risk and wipe out much of the progress we have made in the last decade. Our shared values are on the chopping block.

What we stand to lose in 2010

Below is how the Governor's all-cuts budget affects health care:

- **Forces 67,000 low-income working adults who pay monthly premiums off Basic Health**, the state's only health insurance program for low-income working adults – on top of cutting 35,000 people off last year (cuts \$160 million).
- **Cuts eligibility for the Apple Health for Kids** program for moderate income families; jettisons nearly 20,000 children off the program; and foregoes millions in federal funding for children's health (cuts \$33 million, including \$21 million in federal funds).
- **Eliminates health care for 20,000 people with disabilities and mental health needs** currently

covered by General Assistance-Unemployable and ADATSA (drug and alcohol treatment) (cuts \$134 million).

- **Eliminates family planning services for 12,500 low-income people;** devastates the family planning safety net with likely closures of 19 more low-income birth-control clinics; likely results in same-year new unintended pregnancy costs of at least \$11 million (cuts \$3 million).
- **Eliminates so-called “optional” Medicaid services, including adult dental, vision, and hearing,** hospice, podiatry, and physical/occupational therapy (cuts \$60 million).
- **Cuts Medicaid payments to hospitals** for inpatient and outpatient services by five percent (cuts between \$63 and \$76 million). The Governor’s intent is to restore this cut through the Hospital Safety Net Assessment.
- **Reduces community mental health funding,** funding for mental health services for jail inmates, and programs to safely integrate patients back into communities, forcing people living with mental illnesses to seek care in already overcrowded hospital emergency rooms (cuts \$15 million).
- **Eliminates Maternity Support Services that help 50,000 women** with high risk pregnancies have healthy babies (cuts \$53 million).
- **Eliminates funding for Medicaid interpreter services,** making it more difficult for non-English speakers to get care in physician offices and outpatient settings (cuts \$17 million).
- **Eliminates state grants that help community health clinics provide primary care** to the growing number of uninsured Washingtonians (cuts \$12.5 million).
- Reduces support for the health professional loan repayment program (cuts \$1.2 million).
- Further reduces the state’s tobacco prevention program (cuts \$2.4 million).

“Nowhere else to turn”

Nancy Ludwick of Spokane is very grateful for the health insurance she gets through Basic Health. If the Governor’s all-cuts budget were enacted, she would immediately become uninsured with nowhere else to turn.

Nancy raised four kids all on her own. She put herself through school and became a business owner styling hair for seniors and people with disabilities in their homes. Nancy is 60 years old – five years away from qualifying for Medicare. She has been on Basic Health for more than a decade when she was diagnosed with fibromyalgia. If she loses Basic Health, she does not know where she could get the care she needs.

There is a better way forward!

We can protect these important health care programs and prevent unnecessary suffering by taking a more balanced and humane approach to the recession by:

- **Preventing further erosion** of the things that residents value so much about our state: quality schools, affordable health care, a safety net for the most vulnerable, affordable housing, public safety, and a clean environment.
- **Adopting a balanced approach** to closing the current budget shortfall that includes closing unfair tax loopholes and identifying new revenue sources to stabilize the funding for these programs in the short and long term.

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