

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Resolution on Coverage for Preventive Services

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) support the provision of the scope of preventive benefits by all public and private health insurers and health care plans. These benefits include among others; screening and counseling in primary care settings, prevention of dental caries in young children and tobacco cessation counseling.¹ NACCHO urges the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, state and local governments, and private insurance health plans to retain and/or increase preventive services consistent with the recommendations of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. NACCHO continues to support initiatives, public and private, at the federal, state, and local levels that aim to continue and/or increase preventive services offered, increase access to these services, and reduce disparities in access and utilization of preventive services.

Justification

It is crucial to cover preventive services for all populations; many future medical problems and disease can be prevented if adequate coverage for these preventive services is provided. In fact 50 percent of all medical problems and disease are associated with modifiable health risk factors and the majority of these preventable diseases,² can be addressed and reduced through preventive services, which reduce injury and save thousands of lives per year.³ Furthermore research has demonstrated that coverage of recommended preventive services can “reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, and potentially moderate future health care cost increases because many illnesses and injuries are preventable.”⁴

Currently some recommended preventive services are provided at lower rates to people who are low income, less educated, or members of racial and ethnic minorities and these populations are at higher risk for some preventable illnesses, including cancers, heart disease, stroke, most infectious diseases, and both intentional and unintentional injuries.⁵ However some preventive services currently covered by Medicaid, Medicare, and private health care insurance plans are inconsistent between states. State Medicaid and Medicare policies vary in which U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendations they cover. To ensure access to quality care, states Medicaid coverage should include all USPSTF recommended preventive services. Without coverage of immunizations, screening for sexually transmitted infections and chronic diseases and other preventive health services, program beneficiaries will lose access to such services, which affects their health status and outcomes.⁶ Some states are cutting Medicaid preventive services such as dental and vision⁴ and public policies relating to Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance that are being considered can result in a decline in preventive services. Any

changes to policies need to maintain an emphasis on prevention, ultimately improving health outcomes and saving money.⁶

Record of Action

Proposed by Community Health and Prevention Advisory Committee

Adopted by NACCHO Board of Directors September 9, 2003

Updated January 2006

References

¹Guide to Clinical Preventive Services, 2005. Recommendations of the US Preventive Services Task Force. <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/pocketgd.htm>

² Health Enhancement Research Organization (2003). www.the-hero.org/about/index.htm

³ Society for Human Resource Management. "The Importance of Prevention in Reducing Employee Health Care Costs: Lessons from the HERO Study. (2002) www.shrm.org

⁴ Partnerships for Prevention. "Preventive Services: Helping Employers Expand Coverage." (2003). www.prevent.org/publications/Preventive_Services_Helping_Employers_Expand_Coverage.pdf.

⁵ Coffield, A.B., et al. "Priorities Among Recommended Clinical Preventive Services." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2001; 21 (1).

⁶ American Public Health Association. "*Medicaid, Prevention and Public Health: Invest Today for a Healthier Tomorrow*", August, 2005.