



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

**Health Task Force
Annual Report for 2013**

2013 ACTIVITIES

Implementation of the ACA

CCD has been out front in the movement toward health reform, providing a constant voice for people with disabilities and chronic illness. As the process moves forward, the disability community continues to try to affect the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This year, the efforts of the Health Task Force focused commenting on regulations and providing input to federal agencies and Congress about how the law can be implemented and improved.

Our goal was clear – work toward better access and quality health outcomes for people with disabilities. This took a range of forms, including monitoring regulatory action to ensure the Affordable Care Act lives up to the promises made for insurance market reforms, strong design of benefits, costs that remain affordable, and strong Medicaid and Medicare program expansions. A critical issue for the Health Task Force was providing support and assistance to federal and state efforts to ensure that the essential benefits package covers critical benefits for people with disabilities such as rehabilitation and habilitation services and durable medical equipment, prosthetics and orthotics and supplies.

The actual roll-out of the exchanges was met with a great deal of concern about what the reality of the design could mean to people with disabilities. While much work had been done to provide direction and guidance for the development of the actual marketplaces, their reality was a new wave of challenges for trying to provide the best information and input to specific states.

The Health Task Force has taken the lead on presenting comments from the disability community on both the development of the essential health benefit standards and the design of health insurance exchanges. Comments and contributions include:

- Comments to CMS on proposed rules implementing critical health insurance reforms (January 17, 2013)
- Comments to HHS on the essential health benefits proposed regulation implementing provisions (January 17, 2013)
- Letter to issuers on federally-facilitated and state partnership exchanges (April 3, 2014)
- Letter to National Quality Forum to include people with disabilities and disability expertise on their work groups and committees (October 9, 2013)
- Input to HHS on the non-discrimination provisions of the ACA (October 13, 2013)

Medicaid

The primary effort of this year for the Health Task Force was focused on tracking and providing information where possible to states that were contemplating expanding their Medicaid program under the ACA. The Medicaid expansion included in the ACA was a big move forward in the states that have embraced this option, but not only did some states not make this choice, those that did defined their own benefit package and reimbursement scale, creating a wealth of opportunity to impact how this problem works in the states.

Hand-in-hand with changes must go the consistent work to protect Medicaid funding and work to increase reimbursement of providers. Deficit reduction discussions have focused on the cost and efficiency of the Medicaid program, often including possible structural changes. CCD has opposed efforts to cap or block grant Medicaid.

As cost and efficiency has taken on a new focus, Medicaid managed care has moved to a reality in several states. Relying on the set of principles and recommendations developed previously to assist the discussion about transitioning people with disabilities into Medicaid managed care, the Health Task Force has remained rooted in keeping quality care in the center of those discussions.

Our communications on protecting and strengthening the Medicaid program have been directed to Congress and the White House in response to budget proposals and other efforts to cut Medicaid funding. Comments and contributions in 2013 include:

- Letter to President Obama in support of not reducing funding levels through the budget process (February 14, 2013)
- Comments in conjunction with the Long Term Services and Supports Task Force on proposed Medicaid rules affecting the structure of Alternative Benefit Plans (February 22, 2013)
- Letter to Senate Finance Committee to recommend improvements in mental health policy (October 9, 2013)

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Anticipated 2013 Priorities

- Continue to track ongoing implementation and improve function of the ACA through the federal and state legislative and regulatory processes;
- Protect the Medicare and Medicaid budgets and programs as efforts to reduce spending are proposed;
- Monitor changes to the ACA through the legislative and appropriations process, repeal efforts, and the court system;
- Track performance of exchanges in the states, both federally-facilitated and state-run;
- Monitor and support the ongoing development of Medicaid expansion programs in states;
- Monitor the development of Medicare managed care programs for new populations in some states including those with developmental disabilities and mental health and substance use disorders.

CO-CHAIRS IN 2013:

Mary Andrus, Easter Seals

Lisa Ekman, Health and Disability Advocates

Theresa Morgan, American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

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