



CONNECTICUT WOMEN'S HEALTH CAMPAIGN

c/o Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
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Legislative Agenda 2007: Building Blocks for Universal Health Coverage

The Connecticut Women's Health Campaign (CWHC) supports universal health coverage, and believes that coverage cannot be truly and completely universal without recognizing the special needs of women. In particular, the CWHC supports the following changes to fill gaps in universal coverage in 2007:

MEDICAID AS A BUILDING BLOCK

- Restore HUSKY coverage for parents and to align their eligibility with their children's (185% of the federal poverty level [FPL])
- Expand Medicaid coverage for pregnant women (to 300% FPL)
- Fund interpreter services for Medicaid patients with Limited English Proficiency.

IMPROVE CANCER SCREENING AND TREATMENT

- Increase funding and expand access for early breast, cervical, and ovarian detection services and treatment.

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

- Create a program to support and fund sexual assault nurse examiners in every region/hospital in Connecticut.
- Ensure that emergency contraception is offered to all rape victims in emergency departments and dispensed on-site.

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Connecticut's current health care system is built on employer-sponsored insurance and public insurance programs. In the short term, it is likely that some of these programs will be maintained until universality is achieved. Because national health reform failed and employer-sponsored insurance has eroded, public health insurance programs have been used to fill gaps in universal coverage.

Public health insurance programs can be expanded to comprise some of the building blocks for universal care. While they are usually means-tested, incremental and sometimes fragmented, they have protected many women, particularly low-income women, from becoming uninsured or suffering serious health consequences. For example, Medicaid covers about a quarter of all births in Connecticut and provides long term and nursing home care. Medicare likewise provides care for disabled and elderly women. Connecticut's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program has enabled over 35,000 uninsured women to be screened for life-threatening cancers.

In the context of health care, equal cannot mean the same. Women's special needs and concerns must be addressed to ensure that we have truly equal access to health care. Universal health care for women must be:

- Gender appropriate
- Culturally competent
- Comprehensive and preventive; and
- Confidential.

These principles inform the CWHC's position on any plan for health care reform.

The Connecticut Women's Health Campaign is a broad coalition of groups who have been committed to and working for the health and well-being of Connecticut women and girls for over ten years. Our mission is:

- to achieve access to health care for all women and girls in Connecticut;
- to advance the representation of women at all levels of decision-making, research and service delivery;
- to promote awareness of women and girls' health care needs; and
- to educate the public, especially state policymakers, about these needs.