

# HEALTH REFORM & HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS

POLICY BRIEF

APRIL 2010

## KEY PROVISIONS EFFECTING HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS PROJECTS & INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

On March 23, 2010, the President signed federal health reform legislation into law that is anticipated to extend health care insurance to 32 million Americans who are currently uninsured by 2019. Of these, the Medicaid expansion planned in 2014 will cover 16 million. Areas that are of particular importance to HCH projects and people experiencing homelessness include the following:

### Medicaid Expansion

**Expands Medicaid to everyone at or under 133 percent of the Federal Poverty Level** without any categorical restrictions. For single adults—those most likely to be uninsured—this is approximately \$14,400 per year, which would cover nearly all individuals experiencing homelessness and many others who are very low income (roughly the yearly salary of a full-time worker at minimum wage). Overall, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that this expansion will cover an additional 16 million Americans by 2019. *Unfortunately, the expansion is not effective until 2014.*

### Community Health Centers

**Invests \$11 billion over five years for the Community Health Center Program.** Effective in FY2011, the health reform package improves access to safety net services by increasing funding by \$11 billion for the Health Center program over five years. Most of this funding—\$9.5 billion—will allow health centers to expand their operational capacity to serve nearly 20 million new patients and to enhance their medical, dental, and behavioral health services. The rest—\$1.5 billion—will allow health centers to meet burgeoning capital needs by expanding and improving existing facilities and constructing new sites.

### Workforce Development

- **Invests \$1.5 billion over five years for the National Health Service Corps**, which will place an estimated 15,000 primary care providers in underserved communities
- **Addresses the shortage of nurses by developing incentives and a career path for nursing** To increase the nursing workforce, the law provides for loan repayment and retention grants, increases the capacity for education, and supports training programs
- **Increases the supply of primary care providers** The law creates scholarships for primary care professionals, establishes a public health workforce loan repayment program, provides medical residents with training in preventive medicine and public health, and promotes cultural competence trainings
- **Supports the development of training programs that focus on primary care models** such as medical homes, team management of chronic disease and those that integrate physical and mental health services, such as the Health Care for the Homeless model

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