



PARTICIPANT GUIDE FOR HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

POLICY BACKGROUND AND KEY QUESTIONS

The President-elect believes that every American should have high quality and affordable health care, and to reach this goal, we must modernize our health care system in order to:

- Improve health care quality and cut costs;
- Expand coverage and access; and
- Increase the emphasis on primary care and prevention.

As we work to revamp our health care system, we need to hear from you. There is no problem that we cannot solve together—and it is out of our collective wisdom and experience that we will identify potential solutions to the many health care challenges that we face. We need to hear your ideas and your stories so that we can report them to the President-elect. What follows is brief background information to help you start a discussion and a set of key questions. Your answers to them will guide our collective effort to reform the U.S. health system.

I. OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

The potential of health care in America is enormous and ever expanding. Diseases that once were life-threatening are now curable; conditions that once were devastating are now treatable. We have the knowledge to extend and improve lives.

But, as the stories of those who participated in the recent on-line discussion at www.change.gov testify, our system is flawed and fails to deliver affordable, high-quality health care to all Americans. Our system faces three interrelated problems.

First, health care costs are skyrocketing, hurting our families as well as our economy:

- Health insurance premiums have doubled in the past 8 years, accompanied by increasing co-pays and deductibles that threaten access to care.¹
- Large medical bills have contributed to half of bankruptcies and foreclosures.²
- Rising health care costs place a burden on American businesses, as they try to balance health benefit costs with job growth and competitiveness. American manufacturers are paying more than twice as much on health benefits as most of their foreign competitors (measured in cost per hour).³
- Problems with health care quality and administrative “waste” contribute to these costs:
 - Medical errors result in as many as 100,000 deaths per year in U.S. hospitals.⁴
 - On average, American adults received just 55 percent of recommended care for the leading causes of death and disability.⁵
- The U.S. spent \$412 per capita on health care administration and insurance in 2003—nearly 6 times as much as other developed countries.⁶

Second, over forty-five million Americans have no health insurance:

- Nearly 160 million Americans have job-based insurance, but many are just a pink slip away from joining the ranks of the uninsured. For every 1 percentage point increase in the unemployment rate, over one million people become uninsured.

III. QUESTIONS

1. Briefly, from your own experience, what do you perceive is the biggest problem in the health system?
2. How do you choose a doctor or hospital? What are your sources of information? How should public policy promote quality health care providers?
3. Have you or your family members ever experienced difficulty paying medical bills? What do you think policy makers can do to address this problem?
4. In addition to employer-based coverage, would you like the option to purchase a private plan through an insurance-exchange or a public plan like Medicare?
5. Do you know how much you or your employer pays for health insurance? What should an employer's role be in a reformed health care system?
6. Below are examples of the types of preventive services Americans should receive. Have you gotten the prevention you should have? If not, how can public policy help?
7. How can public policy promote healthier lifestyles?

EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDED PREVENTIVE SCREENINGS

PARTICIPANT SURVEY FOR HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

(Please Give Your Survey To Your Host—Thank You!)

- 1. What do you perceive is the biggest problem in the health system?**
 - a. Cost of health insurance
 - b. Cost of health care services
 - c. Difficulty finding health insurance due to a pre-existing condition
 - d. Lack of emphasis on prevention
 - e. Quality of health care

- 2. What do you think is the best way for policy makers to develop a plan to address the health system problems?**
 - a. Community meetings like these
 - b. Traditional town hall meetings
 - c. Surveys that solicit ideas on reform
 - d. A White House Health Care Summit
 - e. Congressional hearings on C-SPAN

- 3. After this discussion, what additional input and information would best help you to continue to participate in this great debate?**
 - a. More background information on problems in the health system
 - b. More information on solutions for health reform
 - c. More stories on how the system affects real people
 - d. More opportunities to discuss the issues

