



Preserving Medicaid - LOUISIANA

The Issue

In 1965, Title XIX of the Social Security Act created Medicaid, a joint state-federal program that continues to serve as the primary source of acute health care coverage and long-term care for the poor, elderly and disabled. Within broad national guidelines provided by the federal government, Louisiana establishes its own eligibility criteria and determines the type, amount, duration and scope of services provided under the program. Louisiana also sets the rate of payments for providers.

In 2008, over 976,000 people living in Louisiana were Medicaid participants, reflecting the large number of people living in poverty in the state (20.2 percent, compared with a national average of 12.6%). Of Louisiana's total Medicaid population, 62% are children, families and pregnant women, and 38 percent are people over the age of 65 or with disabilities. (As of January 2001, the Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP) covers children with family incomes of up to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level or \$2,942 per month for a family of four.)

Medicaid is financed by both state and federal governments, but administered directly by the state. Federal financial participation ranges from 50 percent to 80 percent and is based on a state's per capita income with poor states receiving a higher federal matching rate. At approximately 70 percent, Louisiana's federal matching rate is among the highest in the nation. Louisiana relies more than most states on state general funds and less on provider taxes and local government contributions.

THE CHRISTUS HEALTH POSITION: A stronger Medicaid program for the poor and underserved.

At the federal level, the Medicare Modernization Act included Medicaid funding important to hospitals serving as a "safety net" to the uninsured. However, budget pressures continue to be a political reality at the federal level. CHRISTUS Health supports full funding and strongly opposes either federal or state budget cuts that would reverse important improvements in health care coverage.

In the 2008 regular session of the Louisiana Legislature, the General Appropriations Bill passed with the House finally concurring with Senate amendments that restored the Medicaid payment cuts to hospitals that were part

of the original House measure. CHRISTUS advocates, working with the Louisiana Hospital Association, fought to restore these cuts that would have resulted in \$3.7 million in cuts to CHRISTUS hospitals in Louisiana.

The CHRISTUS Health Position: Health care for all.

CHRISTUS Health's ministry was founded upon a commitment to health coverage for all. This commitment is based on Catholic social justice teaching and a mission of service to the poor. For the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable persons in Louisiana who cannot gain access to health insurance for them or their families, the current health care system is critically failing and getting worse. We must work to preserve and strengthen Medicaid as the first safety net for these people.

CHRISTUS Health continues to seek to raise public awareness of the injustice of the current health care system, particularly with regard to the uninsured, and to help build support for changes in the health care system targeted to children and the working uninsured.

Furthermore, CHRISTUS Health supports the idea that health care reimbursement dollars should follow the patient, as facilities all over the state provide crucial health care to the indigent and underserved.