



REFORMING MEDICARE

The Issue

As a faith-based, not-for-profit health care system, CHRISTUS Health relies quite heavily upon payments from Medicare to offset our costs of providing service. For more than 40 years, Medicare has been highly successful in achieving affordable health coverage for hundreds of millions of elderly and disabled Americans.

Under the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, seniors became eligible for the first time for a prescription drug benefit. In January 2006, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services implemented the Medicare prescription drug benefit. CHRISTUS Health believes the Medicare Modernization Act represents a much needed advancement in providing benefits for seniors that more closely reflects medical advances made over the last thirty years. While we are grateful for the improvements to Medicare, we will continue to monitor and take action when necessary on the following issues of importance to the ministry.

The CHRISTUS Health Position: Support Medicare reform and full funding

Medicare Reform and Prescription Drugs. CHRISTUS Health will continue to work with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Congress and other provider and consumer organizations to address implementation challenges of the Medicare prescription drug law, particularly to ensure that beneficiaries who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, most of whom are poor and have serious chronic and disabling conditions, navigate the complex challenges of the drug benefit.

Medicare Reform and Hospitals. The Medicare law provides a total of \$25 billion over the next 10 years in relief to hospitals. It helps teaching hospitals continue training caregivers by restoring needed funding; maintains and strengthens vital payments to rural hospitals; protects vital community services, from trauma to neonatal care, through a moratorium on the development of specialty new providers, and; offers relief for hospitals treating large numbers of Medicaid and uninsured patients through the Medicaid Disproportionate-Share Hospital program.

Preserve full funding. CHRISTUS Health will continue to support reforms that promote integrated, high-quality care for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries and improve the program's financial viability. However, budget pressures already are placing that funding at risk. CHRISTUS Health supports full funding for recently enacted programs and strongly opposes federal budget cuts that would reverse important improvements in health care coverage.

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