The Colorado Health Foundation™



New Chapters

It's a new day, a new year, with many blank pages ahead. As we enter 2017, we continue to write this important story about how health takes shape in Colorado, and already there is much to put on paper.

For us, everything begins and ends with our mission: to improve the health of Coloradans. As the largest foundation in Colorado, we welcomed the new year with a renewed commitment to our mission. We intend to continue advancing opportunities to create lasting change for good health and health equity.

Earlier this month, we launched a new website and a new blog. These are important vehicles we use to help others understand how we are expanding our views about health. Having new, more powerful communications tools helps us tell our story about how we are making a difference across the state and enables us to use our voice with even more impact.

The current – and ever-changing – political landscape may produce policy shifts that require our close attention. That means we have to up our game. Yet, it also gives us the opportunity to author important chapters on health coverage and access in the state.

In fact, just yesterday I sent a note about a joint editorial authored by the Foundation, The Colorado Trust and Caring for Colorado. We distributed this editorial to newspapers across the state and to the individuals who engage with our foundations regularly to share where we stand on issues that are essential to the health of Coloradans. The editorial is about protecting and furthering important gains we've made as a state toward improved access to health care and coverage, but it has an "ask" too. For us, it's critical that our policymakers continue to ask this important question when faced with decisions about the future

of health care: “What’s best for the people of Colorado?”

As a Foundation, we intend to go beyond asking that single question. We intend to press our policymakers about the questions we’ve heard from Coloradans across the state and push them to consider what's best for the people they serve:

- How many people will be covered?
- How adequate is that coverage for enabling timely access to services that meet physical, behavioral and oral health care needs?
- Are behavioral health and substance abuse needs adequately addressed, or are they merely an afterthought?
- How affordable is coverage for individuals, families, employers and our government?
- Do the burdens of paying for the costs of coverage and care disproportionately fall on those least able to afford them?
- Are the needs of rural and frontier communities being met?
- What impact might decisions made have on our state's economy, particularly in rural and frontier communities?
- How does it strengthen prevention, population health, health equity and the social determinants of health?

As we fill the blank pages of this year, we will be tireless in our commitment to tackling those challenges head on. Our 2017 policy priorities outline areas where we believe our local, state and federal policymakers have urgent opportunities to advance the health of Coloradans:

- Sustaining and continuing progress on increasing Coloradans’ access to affordable physical and behavioral health services
- Ensuring health insurance coverage provides adequate access to physical and behavioral health (including substance abuse) services

- Improving food assistance programs to better serve Coloradans experiencing hunger and food insecurity
- Providing greater supports in K-12 schools for students' physical and behavioral health in both local and state policies
- Developing greater understanding of the potential impact of Colorado's increasing minimum wage on working families, on employers and businesses, and on public programs that provide health coverage, child care assistance, food assistance and other supports for the working poor

I have high hopes that, together, our relentless efforts to achieve health equity and opportunity will become a reality. But it won't be easy. So, hold on tight – we have much work to do in 2017.

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Blog

POST DATE

Jan 20, 2017

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