



For state officials, knowing what lies around the corner is half the challenge, and the CSG Policy & Research team is committed to providing key insights and analysis on emerging issues across the policy spectrum to state officials. Each year, CSG policy experts take a look at the top issues facing states across in education, energy and environment, fiscal and economic development, federal affairs, health, international affairs, interstate compacts, transportation and infrastructure, and workforce development.

Here's a look at the most important topics on states' health agendas in 2017.

» **Federal Medicaid Reform: Will States be Left Holding the Bag?**

Medicaid provides health insurance coverage for 73 million Americans. In 2015, total expenditures topped \$530 billion; 38 percent of that amount was state funding. It is all but certain that big changes are ahead for Medicaid under the incoming Trump administration, but the shape, fiscal impact and speed of those changes are likely to remain unclear before the sine die adjournment of many legislatures writing state budgets in 2017. States will have many questions as they examine federal proposals for a block grant or per capita caps or some other funding formulation intended to reduce federal funding in the long term. Promised flexibility for states may or may not offset those reductions.

» **Repeal and Replace the Affordable Care Act: How?**

The Trump campaign promised to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. However, any details of replacement remain unclear. Will states resume a more active role in regulating the health insurance market? How will the Medicaid expansion that 31 states and the District of Columbia implemented be funded in the future? How will a replacement for the ACA provide affordable coverage? The Kaiser Foundation reports that in 2016, \$32.2 billion in tax credits helped 9.4 million Americans purchase health insurance.

» **Dealing with the High Cost of Pharmaceuticals**

Public opinion polls find consumers concerned with the high cost of prescription drugs and the increase in their out-of-pocket costs for medicines. States, as providers of health insurance to employees, retired employees, Medicaid enrollees and rising prison populations, share their concerns. States are exploring benefit management strategies, rebates and effectiveness research to leverage savings, while still providing access to life-changing treatment options. At the federal level, proposals have been made to allow importing less expensive prescription drugs from Canada and other countries and to negotiate bulk purchasing for the Medicaid and Medicare programs.

» **Social Determinants of Health**

Increasingly, state decision-makers are taking a public health approach to improving health, pointing to high levels of spending that fail to generate positive health outcomes as compared to other nations. Social determinants of health—factors like socioeconomic status, education, physical environment, employment and social support networks—have a significant impact on health outcomes. To address the social determinants of health, states are linking broader social initiatives to health improvement, including early childhood education, school reforms, transportation and environmental policies.

» **The Opioid Epidemic: State Solutions**

No state or community is exempt from the scourge of the growing opioid epidemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, opioids were involved in 33,091 deaths in 2015, and opioid overdoses have quadrupled since 1999. Prescription drug abuse gives way to heroin and now the vastly more powerful and dangerous drug fentanyl. States are looking for solutions, expanding treatment program availability and risk reduction strategies such as syringe exchange programs and naloxone distribution. Changes in federal Medicaid funding, however, may impact the availability of affordable treatment programs. Medicaid expansion opened treatment options to new populations and federal parity laws require insurance coverage of behavioral health and substance use disorders equivalent to the coverage provided for physical health.



Debra Miller, who joined The Council of State Governments in 2007, directs health policy activities, provides staff support to the CSG Health Policy Committee and spearheads the well-received CSG Medicaid Policy Academy series. Miller writes regularly on states' implementation of health reform. She directed a multimillion-dollar, multiyear cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to educate state lawmakers on innovative policies to prevent and treat chronic diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Miller previously worked for 23 years for a state-level nonprofit organization, including as executive director and primary lobbyist, that advocated for policies that were good for disadvantaged children and their families. She also worked for state government to implement services for persons with developmental disabilities.

Get Involved

CSG provides state leaders a variety of regional and national opportunities to actively engage on issues of importance to their jurisdictions and constituents. CSG's regional and national committees and task forces are designed to encourage multistate problem solving, the sharing of best practices, and networking among state officials and between the public and private sectors.

CSG's Health Public Policy Committee is co-chaired this year by Kansas state Rep. Susan Concannon and Massachusetts state Rep. Denise Garlick. Michael Barbieri, director of the Delaware Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health, serves as vice chair.

In recent years, the CSG Health Public Policy Committee has focused on several key issues, including health care reform, Medicaid, chronic disease prevention and mental health. The committee will sponsor two Medicaid policy academies in 2017. One will provide an overview of Medicaid policy issues to legislators new to health and Medicaid committees in their states. The second is designed for leaders of health committees to explore promising strategies states use to better manage their Medicaid programs, to hold down their costs and to improve health outcomes for Medicaid enrollees.

The committee will hold its next meeting at the CSG 2017 National Conference, Dec. 14-16 in Las Vegas.

CSG RESOURCES»



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