

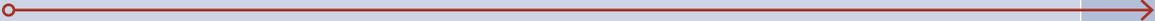
Health for *Life*

BETTER HEALTH. BETTER HEALTH CARE.

BUILDING COMMUNITY MOMENTUM FOR HEALTH REFORM

A HOSPITAL LEADER'S GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ACTION





A HOSPITAL GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

In every community, the blue and white “H” points to a place that friends and neighbors rely on for care, 24-7. And while no two hospitals are the same, all share the role of community provider. Help us provide our communities leadership on the important issue of health reform.

The American Hospital Association’s (AHA) Board has spent the past few years discussing health reform with hundreds of hospital leaders as well as national leaders from business, insurers, community health, consumer groups, labor and others. The result is in the development of a reform framework called ***Health for Life: Better Health. Better Health Care.*** Enclosed is a set of resources to help you build momentum for health reform locally, drawing from lessons we’ve learned and materials we’ve found useful.

From the hospital boardroom to the patient bedside, the men and women in America’s hospitals are community leaders. Daily they see the impact health and our current health system have on patients and families. Involving hospital trustees, employees, volunteers and auxiliaries is the only way to start a tide of change. Working together, we can drive the health reform discussion and achieve real change.



**ENGAGING *HOSPITAL TRUSTEE LEADERS*
IN HEALTH REFORM**

Every day, the women and men in America's hospitals see the personal way health affects local communities, from emergency rooms and birthing centers to free clinics and cancer centers. As the debate over health care reform continues to dominate the media, political campaigns and the minds of Americans, hospitals stand in position to help their communities understand what health policy means for local families and neighbors. Building momentum around health reform begins with you. After completing the checklist below, consider the outlined actions on the next page.

Determine the following:

- As states discuss health reform, has your board considered ways to be proactive in changing health and health care?
- Have you listened to community leaders talk about their wishes for health reform?
- Are you including elements of health reform when you speak to local business and community leaders?
- Do you have an employee strategy in place to ensure the women and men in your hospital have an opportunity to be involved in health reform discussions?



The following steps reflect a natural progression based on the process AHA followed with its *Health for Life* initiative. Followed as outlined, you can lead reform discussions at the local level starting with your organizational leadership, hospital board of trustees, employees and volunteers, as well as other local leaders. Consider building your activities around the Health for Life framework.

Be aware that 501(c)(3) organizations may not directly or indirectly support or oppose a candidate or political party but may conduct non-partisan voter education and registration activities. It is important for hospitals to distinguish between prohibited election-related activities and permissible voter education and registration activities. For more information and guidance, consult AHA's "Legal Guidelines for Election-Related Activity" (in Additional Resources). Support materials to help you execute these activities are available in the appendix CD-ROM.

ACTIONS

STEP 1

Objective: Lead reform discussions at the local level.

Action: Bring your hospital and your community into the health reform debate (see *Understanding Reform Perceptions*).

STEP 2

Objective: Encourage all local leaders to press their elected officials for action.

Action: Share the "Ask the Candidates" questions with everyone who participates in your reform discussions (see *Encouraging Reform Participation*).

UNDERSTANDING REFORM PERCEPTIONS

Audience: Boards of Trustees within the Hospital or System

Hospital trustees are a powerful and effective resource for building community will. They routinely see the fallout from lack of access, disparities associated with coverage and preventive care and are acutely aware that achieving better health and health care is critical.

As a stakeholder in America's health care, hospital trustees have the unique power to engage friends and colleagues in candid discussions about health reform. As a hospital trustee, they also have the power to bring about change.

To start the momentum, share the *Health for Life* framework and issue backgrounders (*framework memo and issue backgrounders available in the appendix CD-ROM*) with your trustees and senior management. Set a date to discuss the framework.

Allow time for your entire board of trustees or a task force of key members to do a brief "homework" assignment, an informal summary about which they can be prepared to discuss on the set date.

tools you can use

Available on the appendix CD-ROM: Health reform framework memo and issue backgrounders.

Ask hospital trustees, or select members, to informally ask three to five community members for whom health care is a major concern the following question:

1 HOMEWORK

If you could change one thing about America's health care system, what would it be? Why?

Ask that question of three or five of the following people:

- ★ Yourself
- ★ A business leader
- ★ A patient or individual with a chronic condition
- ★ A person in their 30s
- ★ Someone without insurance

The objective is to listen to the views of others and understand their perspective on the most important changes that need to be made in our health care system.



At the follow up meeting with the full board of trustees, allow at least an hour for discussion.

2 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Questions to begin follow-up discussion: (Start by asking those who completed the "homework" to share their impressions.)

- ★ After talking to others, what do you believe are the most serious problems of our health system?
- ★ What do you believe are the most important levers for change? (Insurance coverage for all? Changing provider payment incentives? New system financing? Improved care coordination? Accessible patient health information through IT? Standardized health care transactions? Others?)
- ★ What elements of the *Health for Life* reform framework came up most often? (Focus on wellness; most efficient, affordable care; highest quality care; best information; health coverage for all, paid for by all)

ENCOURAGING REFORM PARTICIPATION AMONG BOARDS OF TRUSTEES

Over the coming months candidates from all political parties running for office will come calling. They will want to talk about health care...and hospitals. This is the opportunity to encourage your board of trustees to become engaged. While 501(c)(3) organizations cannot support or oppose candidates or issues, nor should hospitals publicize campaign events, hospitals may conduct non-partisan other education and registration activities.

Below are key questions AHA is encouraging every one to ask of those running for elected office. Share these with your trustees and encourage them to get elected officials on the record.

KEY QUESTIONS

Now is the time for candidates to be on the record about how they would address America's health care challenges. To put them on the record, ask them these four questions:

1. If elected, what steps would you take to provide health care coverage for all?
2. If elected, what will you do to improve health and health care in America?
3. If elected, how would you work to achieve change in a non-partisan manner?
4. If elected, what will you do to make sure America's hospitals have the resources to meet their communities' need?

tools you can use

Available on the appendix CD-ROM:

"Ask the Candidate" questions.

