



# Health for Life

Better Health. Better Health Care.

**For many years,** hospitals have been working with each other and with our communities to build a roadmap for improving America's health care system.

While it is often said that the U.S. has the best health care in the world – and there is much of which we can be proud – for many, our “system” doesn't work well. Millions are uninsured or underinsured. Many with coverage find their insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs difficult to shoulder.

Yet even if everyone had affordable health care coverage, it would not solve all our problems. Chronic illness is growing at an alarming rate. Health care quality, safety and efficiency are not where they need to be. Payment policies reward volume over value. Care is provided in silos – often not coordinated or integrated across settings. Shortages of physicians, nurses and other caregivers, already a serious problem, are predicted to grow even worse.

In anticipation of the health care reform debate, after consultation with hospitals across the country and other stakeholders, AHA's leadership created a framework to transform American's health care. This framework identifies **five essential elements** that we must build upon to make care more safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable and patient-focused.

- **Focus on Wellness.** Good health – physical, mental and oral – is essential for a productive and vibrant America. A focus on wellness must be integrated into the lifecycle, from birth to death, and be encouraged in our homes, schools, workplaces and communities.
- **The Most Efficient, Affordable Care.** America will not be satisfied unless and until the cost of insurance and the cost of health care are affordable.
- **The Highest Quality Care.** Motivate doctors, nurses, hospitals, nursing homes and others to work together with patients and families to make sure the right care is given at the right time and in the right setting.
- **The Best Information.** Good information is the gateway to good care. We must be able to move and access information electronically.
- **Coverage for All, Paid for by All.** Health coverage for all is a shared responsibility. Everyone – individuals, business, insurers and governments – must play a role in both expanding coverage and paying for it.



## National Framework for Change

**Within each element,** the framework contains a set of initiatives that – over the span of several years – will improve our nation's health care system by fundamentally reshaping care delivery and realigning incentives. Some improvements will require changes in public policy, and many were included in the Affordable Care Act. Others can be made today through the leadership and commitment by hospitals, physicians, and other providers... and hundreds of efforts are underway. AHA's *Hospitals in Pursuit of Excellence* initiative provides a growing portfolio of resources to accelerate the transformation of care and achieve excellence in clinical, operational and financial performance.

Since June 2008, AHA has advocated for changes based on this framework. *Health for Life* will continue to be the standard by which we judge any legislative or regulatory efforts to transform the health care delivery system.

# Ways to Reach the Goals of *Health for Life*

## Better Health. Better Health Care.

Below are the set of goals and policy actions we would like to see at the federal and state level to transform health and health care in America. These ideas were developed by six expert advisory groups involving nearly 100 different organizations representing consumers, business, labor, insurers, physicians, nurses, hospitals and others. Some of these ideas have been addressed in recent legislation, while others await action. We believe these ideas will help put in place the foundation for achieving better health and better health care. What you see is only a short summary of what each element contains.

**Additional details can be found at [www.aha.org](http://www.aha.org).**

### Focus on Wellness

- Invest in the provision of primary care services
- Promote healthy pregnancies and newborns
- Invest in America's public health
- Provide incentives to encourage healthy choices and behaviors
- Provide a national investment in school and community-based health
- Call for a national media campaign focusing on healthy lifestyles
- Provide support and coaching needed to change unhealthy behaviors
- Enhance health professions education to include a focus on wellness
- Focus on chronic care management
- Create an objective, trusted source of consumer health information and education

### Most Efficient, Affordable Care

- Simplify the working of public and private insurance
- Create a better alternative to today's liability system
- Test payment redesign to reward quality providers who follow recommended "best practices"
- Redefine roles for workers to meet future care needs
- Renovate the education of health care professionals and the broader health care workforce
- Make available to consumers meaningful information on the quality, price, use and comparative effectiveness of health care services
- Analyze the comparative effectiveness, risks and benefits of new technologies, medicines, practices and procedures for individual conditions
- Expand educational capacity and emphasize early math and science learning to meet current and future health care workforce needs
- Test payment redesign to give provider groups a single amount to manage the entire episode of a patient's care and better coordinate care
- Adequately fund national performance improvement measurement

### Highest Quality Care

- Modernize laws and regulations to allow doctors, hospitals and others to work together in teams or "networks"
- Create a national investment to research the best evidence in patient care and effective quality improvement strategies. Develop methods for speeding the adoption of these methods within the field

- Foster development of care teams
- Integrate physical and mental health care delivery
- Expand options for end-of-life care at home
- Require everyone to complete, and providers to honor, a summary of wishes regarding life-sustaining treatment
- Adequately fund national performance improvement measurement
- Redesign coverage and payment to guarantee parity
- Reduce health disparities and inequity in health care delivery

### Best Information

- Speed the creation of electronic health records and personal health records by selecting and using "interoperable" health standards
- Drive the secure exchange of clinical information among and across different providers of care
- Encourage private sector creation and use of unique, confidential health information identifiers to accurately and securely link patients to their health records
- Fundamentally reform the payment model to encourage specific IT adoption by health care professionals and hospitals
- Provide incentives for health care suppliers and insurers to enable the use of IT
- Conduct research and development on the market requirements and business models needed to create the next generation of systems and technologies
- Allow providers and community collaboratives to share information exchange capabilities
- Establish national models for data use that will facilitate community health improvement

### Health Coverage for All, Paid for by All

- Every individual must have and contribute to the cost of health care coverage
- Every employer must take responsibility for providing health care coverage for their employees and contribute to the cost
- Every insurer must guarantee access to coverage that is affordable, gives consumers the protection they need and delivers value
- Governments must maintain their current responsibility for coverage for seniors, disabled and certain low-income people
- Collective financing will be needed

**For more information,  
visit Health for Life at  
[www.aha.org](http://www.aha.org).**

