

American Nurses Association (ANA)

Universal coverage with a standard package of health care benefits

Organization Description: ANA is the full-service professional organization representing the nation's 2.9 million registered nurses. ANA is composed of 54 state and local member associations. ANA advocates for the economic and general welfare of nurses in the workplace. It also lobbies Congress and regulatory agencies on a range of health care issues.

Proposal Summary: ANA supports universal health care coverage and access to a standard benefits package. The proposal also focuses on improving health outcomes and reducing costs through greater emphasis on primary care services, investment in HIT, and adoption of evidence-based best practices.

- **Coverage:** Provide access to a standard package of basic health services for all Americans. Coverage would be offered to currently uninsured residents through private plans and Medicare. The proposal would expand Medicare, permitting employers or individuals to buy into the program. Private plans would also offer the standard benefit packages. Employees would have the option to purchase additional services through commercial insurance, but would have to pay higher premiums and cost-sharing for these services. In addition, ANA focuses on improving access to services by making services available at convenient hours, in accessible locations, and with reasonable waiting times. Medicaid should continue to cover low-income individuals under its current structure. ANA opposes large-scale cuts to the Medicaid program and does not support the use of medical savings accounts for Medicaid beneficiaries.
- **Wellness and Prevention:** Expand availability of community-based primary care services. Improve payment for primary care. Make patients more responsible for their personal health care and decision making.
- **Care Coordination:** Pay providers who participate in chronic disease management programs.
- **Health Information Technology (IT):** Establish financial incentives for interest-free financing packages to support providers' investments in health IT to improve patient safety.
- **Quality:** Increase awareness of evidence-based best practices and financially reward providers who adopt these best practices. Create medical environments that are supportive of identifying medical errors and determining the cause of such errors. Address the nursing shortage by engaging in workforce planning, improving the work environment (e.g. shift limits), and increasing capacity to educate registered nurses.
- **Cost:** Reduce overall cost of health care coverage by using the most cost-effective providers and therapeutic options in the appropriate site of service. This includes increasing emphasis on community-based and preventive services and limiting use of expensive, high-tech treatments. The proposal would also maintain cost-sharing requirements for beneficiaries, but emphasizes that such cost-sharing, including deductibles and co-pays, should not be barriers to accessing care. Cost-sharing would be adjusted based on individuals' ability to pay.

Proposal Date: 2005

Source: ANA's Health Care Agenda 2005, <http://www.nursingworld.org/readroom/anhca05.pdf>; Nurses Legislative and Regulatory Initiatives for the 109th Congress, <http://www.nursingworld.org/GOVA/FEDERAL/LEGIS/109/initiatives.htm>.