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Oklahoma Policy Institute

2017 POLICY PRIORITY: PROTECT ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Background

More than 800,000 Oklahoman children, pregnant women, seniors, and those with disabilities rely on Medicaid — known in Oklahoma as SoonerCare — for basic medical care. Over 100,000 Oklahomans get needed care through the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and Oklahoma's network of community health centers. Thousands of Oklahomans who are elderly or who have disabilities are able to stay in their homes and communities because of supports provided by the Department of Human Services.

Oklahoma's health care safety net is effective when sufficiently funded. However, years of funding cuts have jeopardized basic access to care for hundreds of thousands of Oklahomans. Oklahoma has cut payments to health care providers, hiked copayments for SoonerCare patients, halted expansions of a successful, efficient initiative to prevent suicides, and slashed funding to community health centers that care for Oklahoma's most underserved, uninsured communities. Without more funding this year, affordable in-home care for Oklahomans who are elderly or have disabilities may cease to exist altogether.



The Solution

The Legislature should reject any budget that would cut our health agencies further and should provide revenues to roll back the most damaging cuts. The Legislature should not impose greater barriers, such as eligibility restrictions, work requirements, or greater cost sharing, between low-income families and the care that they need.

What You Should Do

Contact your state Representative and Senator and urge them to reject proposals that further restrict access to health care for low-income Oklahomans. Tell them to accept federal funds where they are available to extend insurance coverage to more Oklahomans and reduce uncompensated care costs that threaten to put many rural hospitals and community health clinics out of business.

You can look up your Senator and Representative at <http://okpolicy.org/find-your-legislator/>, call the House switchboard at 405-521-2711, and call the Senate switchboard at 405-524-0126.