

# Public Policy Update

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## Congress Moves Forward on Health Care Reform

### House Passes Health Care Reform bill

On November 14, the House of Representatives passed its merged health care reform legislation which included both the home visitation grant program and the Medicaid option provisions. Those sections of the final bill can be seen here: [Section 1904 \(Grant Program\)](#) and [Section 1713 \(Medicaid Option\)](#).

### Senate Health Care Reform Floor Debate in December

The Senate passed a cloture vote just before Thanksgiving, 60 to 39 along party lines, to begin full debate of major health care legislation, propelling President Obama's top domestic initiative over a crucial, preliminary hurdle. The Senate bill can be viewed at: [Senate Committee Report language](#). Senate leadership expects debate on the bill to last most of December with a target of passing the bill before Christmas break. The conference process would then occur during the holiday and when Congress resumes in January. The current goal set by Congressional leadership is to send a final version of the health care reform bill to the President before his State of the Union address.

### Key Differences between House and Senate Home Visiting Provisions:

- **Agency:** The House bill designates the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) as the administering agency while the Senate designates the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).
- **Medicaid:** The House health reform legislation includes the simplified Medicaid option for States to more easily cover nurse home visitation. The Senate bill does not include this Medicaid option.
- **Program Tiers:** While the House legislation establishes two tiers of programs, with the Secretary determining which programs have the strongest evidence and receive increased funding over time, the Senate describes three categories of programs that are eligible for funding but does not tie funding percentages to those categories.
- **Matching Funds:** Beginning in 2011, the House requires States to maintain at least the funding level from two years before, and calls for a graduated State matching requirement (from 15% to 25% in 2012 and beyond). The Senate requires States to maintain 2009 funding levels, and does not require a match.

### Next Steps

Once the Senate debates and passes its legislation, the conference negotiations between key House and Senate Committee leaders will begin. NFP continues to work to strengthen bi-partisan, bi-cameral support to ensure that both the grant program and the Medicaid provision are included in the final version of the bill. Additional information to explain the rationale for the Medicaid Option can be viewed at: [Nurse Home Visitation Medicaid Option](#).

For more information or to view additional materials/documents relating to NFP-NSO's public policy agenda, please visit the Nurse-Family Partnership web site's [public policy](#) section.