

# Policy and Government Affairs Update



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## The U.S. House of Representatives Leadership Releases Health Care Reform Legislation to be Debated on Floor

Yesterday, House Leadership released the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962), which will be debated before the House of Representatives in the coming weeks. The legislation is the product of many months of work on behalf of several committees to merge health care reform proposals reported out of the Energy & Commerce Committee, Ways & Means Committee and Education & Labor Committee. This landmark legislation retains unchanged the two important provisions to fund home visitation programs that were included in the earlier Tri-Committee bill (H.R. 3200): (1) the creation of an innovative home visitation grant program for States to fund a wide array of home visitation programs that improve prenatal, maternal and newborn health, child health and development, parenting skills, school readiness, family self-sufficiency, and reductions in child abuse, neglect and injury with tiered funding devoted to programs with the strongest evidence; and (2) provisions that simplify existing Medicaid coverage of nurse home visitation by creating a voluntary option for States to cover nurse home visitation services in a distinct service category. These complementary home visiting provisions provide States with critical funding to improve the health, development, well-being and stability of low-income and at-risk children and families. The bill and related documents are available at [http://majorityleader.gov/members/health\\_care.cfm](http://majorityleader.gov/members/health_care.cfm).

## Summary of Home Visiting Proposals

- **ACF Grant Program, available at**

[http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/resources/files/PDF/Policy/Health\\_Care\\_Reform\\_Package\\_section\\_1904.pdf](http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/resources/files/PDF/Policy/Health_Care_Reform_Package_section_1904.pdf)

Section 1904 (pp 1176-1188), Grants to States for Quality Home Visitation Programs for Families with Young Children and Families Expecting Children incorporates most of the Early Support for Families Act (HR 2667), introduced earlier by Representatives McDermott (D-WA), Davis (D-Ill) and Platts (R-PA). This section creates a State formula grant program in the Administration for Children & Families, with two tiers of funded programs. The top tier is for programs supported by the strongest evidence, not defined, and receives 40% of grant funds initially, growing to 60% of grant funds after 5 years. Total funding is reduced from the President's proposal, which initially proposed \$1.9B over the first 5 years, with an additional \$6.7B proposed for the second 5 years. The House Tri-Committee bill proposes \$750M over 5 years, with \$50M proposed for FY 2010, \$100M for FY 2011, \$150M for FY 2012, \$200M for FY 2013, and \$250M for FY 2014.

- **State Medicaid Option for Simplified Billing of Nurse Home Visitation, available at**

[http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/resources/files/PDF/Policy/Health\\_Care\\_Reform\\_Package\\_section\\_1713.pdf](http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/resources/files/PDF/Policy/Health_Care_Reform_Package_section_1713.pdf)

Section 1713 (pp 1045-1047), Optional Coverage of Nurse Home Visitation Services, will simplify existing Medicaid coverage of nurse home visitation services by providing States with the option of covering nurse home visitation services under a distinct service category called "nurse home visitation." This clarification will allow States to more easily seek reimbursement for the full range of Medicaid services that our nurses perform. This new service category is limited to proven programs for first-time pregnant women and children under age 2. Section 1713 also has a rule of construction that preserves

all existing reimbursement strategies for nurse home visitation, so that States may choose to continue seeking Medicaid reimbursement for NFP through, for example, Targeted Case Management or Administrative Case Management, if they prefer. This new provision will allow reimbursement of a larger percentage (estimated 60-75%) of the services our nurses perform than is currently available.

## **Next Steps**

Leadership in the House of Representatives anticipates calling the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962) to the floor for debate and a vote in the next few weeks. We are urging Members to support both the grant program and Medicaid simplification provisions as important components of reforming our health care system to improve the health and development of low income and at-risk children and families. The Senate has not yet but will soon merge its health care reform proposals into legislation that will be debated on the Senate floor.