

The Community Health Care Association of New York State
Support for Universal Coverage and Universal Access to Primary Care

NYS FQHCs Are Mandated to Provide Comprehensive Primary Care to All, Regardless of Insurance Coverage

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) serve all patients regardless of immigration status, insurance coverage, or ability to pay. FQHCs have robust outreach and enrollment programs and seek to ensure all eligible individuals enroll in appropriate coverage. Nevertheless, 16% of NYS health center patients are uninsured, three times the Statewide average. Health centers do not collect information on immigration status, but we assume that the majority of uninsured patients at FQHCs are not eligible for coverage due to immigration status.

CHCANYS Supports Universal Coverage and Universal Access to Primary Care

CHCANYS supports efforts to ensure that all New Yorkers have health insurance coverage. However, expanding access to coverage does not ensure that patients will have access to needed care. In addition to coverage expansion efforts, CHCANYS recommends that the State take immediate steps to ensure that all individuals have **access** to care – meaning that timely, high quality primary care is accessible to **everyone** regardless of geographic, economic, or racial disparities. Increased access to primary care must be at the forefront of any healthcare system reform efforts. Comprehensive primary care has been proven to improve health outcomes and reduce costly emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

In the current political environment, many people are reluctant to enroll in government-run programs for which they are eligible due to concern about increased immigration enforcement actions. As the State continues to determine the best path to ensure universal coverage, additional investments must be made to trusted community-based providers, such as FQHCs to ensure that they are able to continue to provide robust, comprehensive primary care for the most vulnerable populations.

Additional Investments in Workforce are Critical to Meet Patient Need

FQHCs employ thousands of individuals across the State. However, they currently struggle to recruit and retain staff in key positions (including primary care physicians, dentists and psychiatrists). Any universal coverage legislation should include additional incentives to boost workforce capacity, particularly for primary care providers in underserved areas, to meet demand for services.