



For Immediate Release
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LOUISIANA HEALTH FIRST PROJECT

Statement attributable to: Roger D. Smith, MD
President, Louisiana State Medical Society

Background

The provision of quality, evidenced based, patient centered medical care to Louisiana's Medicaid population is a priority for the Louisiana State Medical Society. In the early 1990's, as the costs for the Medicaid program were escalating rapidly, the LSMS called for major reforms of the system in Louisiana. This call for change resulted in the introduction in the 1995 general session of the legislature of the Access to Better Care (ABC) Plan. The legislature referred the plan to the Department of Health and Hospitals to be considered as a pilot program. The LSMS has continued to advocate for reforming the Medicaid system and remained active in efforts to begin the process of change. The Board of Governors of the LSMS at its meeting on November 5, 2008 adopted the following position on the Louisiana Health First project:

Based on the information provided as of the October 28, 2008 meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), the Louisiana State Medical Society opposes the plan design for Louisiana Health First because physicians have not been adequately informed on the design of the plan and have not been provided access to the waiver which embodies the intended plan to be implemented. This lack of transparency is an obstacle to evaluating the feasibility of the proposed plan on which the waiver request is predicated.

Of the current models of Medicaid Reform considered for the plan design of Louisiana Health First, the Louisiana State Medical Society is convinced the North Carolina model is the only one with documented success for meeting patient needs, providing increased access to care and producing significant cost savings. Therefore, it is the most proven and workable model for designing a plan to begin the process of Medicaid reform in Louisiana that will improve efficiency and quality for both patients and healthcare providers.

The Louisiana State Medical Society believes that provider service networks in the plan should be patient centered, community based not-for-profit entities that combine the progress made over the last decade in the existing CommunityCare program and the continued utilization of physician/patient relationships already established in the Medicaid program. Any plan for Medicaid Reform should maximize the retention of Louisiana tax dollars in Louisiana.

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