



Tools for the Field: Answering Tough Questions on Health Reform

As part of our work in the field, we all face tough questions about health reform. Community Catalyst put together this quick guide to help you answer some of these tough questions that you may receive from the public and/or the media about reform.

A few quick tips

- Don't repeat the "bad" – Don't repeat the message or misinformation of your opposition – state the truth and move on.

If someone says: "Health reform will lead to the rationing of care."

Respond with: "Reform will provide you and your doctor with better information about which treatments work and don't work. If you know what is most effective, you can make decisions that help you get the best care and the best value for your health care dollar. For too long insurance companies have denied coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, refused to cover certain treatments, and dropped coverage when people become sick and really need it. Reform will help put an end to these unfair practices and provide us with more choices and access, not less."

- Pivot – Pivot to your positive message and reclaim the discussion.

If someone says: "We can't afford health reform right now."

Pivot to a message like: "We can't afford to wait – health care reform needs to happen now to help the millions of families struggling to get the care they need. It is imperative for American families and essential for getting the economy on track."

- Use Clear and Simple Messages – Remember, some people may be tuning into this discussion for the first time and will want to understand, in clear (non-wonky) language, how reform will help them and their families.
- Recycle and Reuse – Make sure your messages are simple and clear so that you can repeat them over and over again. Repetition is your friend.
- This is not a debate – Resist the temptation to do point by point refutation of the misrepresentations that are out there. That will get you stuck in your opponents messaging frame. Quickly rebut and pivot back to your core messages.
- Use the right messenger to deliver the right message – For example, ask supportive small business owners to talk about how health reform will help them and their employees.

Key overall messages for the coming weeks

1. The current health care system is unsustainable. Now is the time to come together to fix what is broken and ensure that Americans have access to quality, affordable health care.
2. The health reform proposals will help middle-class families and make sure the system is fair by guaranteeing secure coverage and creating affordable health care options.
3. Congress and the Administration have provided American solutions that will make it more affordable for families to get insurance and the quality care they need. All the proposed plans are a major improvement over our current system.
4. We cannot afford to wait. America's working families are struggling to pay skyrocketing health care costs or even maintain coverage in a stagnant economy with rising unemployment. We need health care reform now to ensure access to affordable, secure, quality health care for everyone

Questions and Answers

Isn't Congress moving too fast?

A: Our nation has been grappling with this issue for decades. Every day we delay is a day that thousands lose their insurance, millions remain uninsured, and our nation throws health dollars away on expensive and avoidable care for conditions that could be treated more cost-effectively in a doctor's office.

Real reform cannot come soon enough for America's children and families.

In our current economy, isn't health reform too expensive? How can the country afford to do this now?

A: Our nation has been grappling with this issue for decades. It is the cost of doing nothing that is too great. Without reform, the costs of premiums will eat up more and more of families' pay checks, employers will continue to struggle to provide coverage for their employees, and the overall costs of health care will continue to rise.

We need to reform the current system to ensure that families have access to the care they need when they need it.

Small businesses are already struggling in our economy – won't they be hurt under reform?

A: It is the status quo that is hurting small businesses – a growing number of them cannot afford to provide coverage for themselves or their employees under the current system.

The legislation in Congress already provides numerous benefits to small businesses:

- Tax credits to make providing coverage more affordable
- Subsidies to help many small business owners and their employees
- Access to insurance plans through the Exchange which will help provide small businesses get better value for their health care dollar.
- A more level playing field between large and small employers with respect to health coverage, making it easier for small businesses to attract and retain workers.

Won't reform end up rationing health care and put a government bureaucrat between me and my doctor?

A: More people will have better quality and more affordable coverage. Those who like their current insurance can keep it. Under reform health coverage will be more secure – insurance companies won't be able to deny coverage when people become sick. If someone loses employer-based insurance, there will be more affordable options available. With reform, health care will be there when people need it most and support the doctor-patient relationship.

Isn't health reform going to hurt seniors?

A: Seniors will be helped by health reform. Seniors will not only keep the health care they get under Medicare now, but health care reform will make Medicare better and stronger. Reform will reduce seniors' out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs and eliminate out-of-pocket costs for prevention services in Medicare.

Additional Resources

[Herndon Alliance Message of the Week](#)

[Herndon Alliance and Center for American Progress' Fixing Health Care: What's in it for You?](#)

[Florida Chain's Seniors Only Gain – and Lose Nothing - In Health Care Reform](#)

[The White House's Health Insurance Reform Reality Check Web site](#)