COMMONWEALTH FUND TASK FORCE ON PAYMENT AND DELIVERY SYSTEM REFORM

Overview of Recommendations for a High-Performing Delivery System



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THE ISSUE: The U.S. health care system is lauded for its sophistication, innovation, and research capabilities. For too many people, however, it remains unaffordable, inequitable, and fragmented. These failures have become more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, adding greater urgency to the need for widespread change.

THE SOLUTION: We all want a stronger, high-performing health care delivery system that is affordable, equitable, and consistently high-quality. That's why members of the Commonwealth Fund's Task Force on Payment and Delivery System Reform harnessed their real-world experience and the evidence and lessons learned from more than a decade of payment and care delivery experimentation to present a way forward over the next 10 years.

A FEDERAL FOCUS: The Task Force focuses on opportunities for federal reform of the health care delivery system, not on insurance coverage or state issues, as it believes there is substantial opportunity for bipartisan collaboration in this area.

WHAT WE PROPOSE: The Task Force has identified six policy imperatives to advance a system of higher-quality, more affordable, and more equitable care:

1. Increase Delivery System Preparedness for Future Health Disasters

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed numerous deficiencies and inequities in the U.S. health system and its capacity to prepare for, and respond to, any national health-related crisis — not just a novel virus. To ensure the health care delivery system is ready to meet future health-related national disasters, the federal government should:

- Leverage digital solutions, data, and research to support national disaster responses.
- Prepare the health care workforce for future health disasters.
- Develop, implement, and regularly update a national strategy for disaster responses.

2. Increase Health System Accountability for Quality, Equity, and Cost of Care

The U.S. needs to move faster toward value-based payment, particularly as Medicare faces insolvency, possibly as soon as 2024, and Medicaid consumes larger portions of state budgets. To achieve this goal, the federal government should:

- Accelerate adoption of value-based payment in Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP.
- Increase adoption of integrated care for people dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid.
- Identify the top five priorities for strategic investment at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) over the next five years.

3. Strengthen the Nation's Primary Health Care System

Strong primary care leads to better health outcomes, greater equity, and lower per capita costs. Yet the U.S. primary care system often falls short. Primary care in the 21st century should be: team-based; not limited to a clinician's office; tech-enabled, with wider use of digital health tools; and fully prepared to address behavioral health and social needs. To strengthen primary care, the federal government should:

- Improve the quality and comprehensiveness of primary care through payment reform.
- Expand supply, diversify, and increase retention of primary care clinicians, particularly in underserved communities.
- Promote and support wider use of telemedicine.

4. Support Empowerment and Engagement of People, Families, and Communities

Meaningful partnership with patients and communities is an essential ingredient for a health care system that works for everyone. To create such a system, the federal government should:

- Create processes to meaningfully engage patients, caregivers, and communities in care delivery and policymaking long term.
- Confront and combat racism in health care by holding institutions accountable.
- Promote digital platforms for sustained patient engagement.

5. Reduce Administrative Burden

Without addressing and tackling what contributes to financial waste, patient frustration, and clinician burnout, the U.S. will never achieve a high-performing health care system. To address this challenge, the federal government should:

- Develop uniform standards for billing and payment.
- Streamline and standardize performance metrics.
- Remove unnecessary administrative obstacles in care delivery.

6. Promote a Balance of Regulatory and Competitive Approaches

The U.S. health care system is characterized by notable market failures, from growing consolidation to lack of transparency. These failures are driving up prices and widening inequities. To remedy these deficiencies, the federal government should:

- Regulate markets where competition is deemed absent or ineffective.
- Strengthen antitrust enforcement related to provider system and payers.
- Foster greater transparency of price, quality, and health equity information.

Read the full report for all Task Force recommendations.

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