

**No. 48. An act relating to a universal and unified health system.**

(H.202)

2011

**PRINCIPLES FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM**

The general assembly adopts the following principles as a framework for reforming health care in Vermont:

- (1) The state of Vermont must ensure universal access to and coverage for high-quality, medically necessary health services for all Vermonters. Systemic barriers, such as cost, must not prevent people from accessing necessary health care. All Vermonters must receive affordable and appropriate health care at the appropriate time in the appropriate setting.
- (2) Overall health care costs must be contained and growth in health care spending in Vermont must balance the health care needs of the population with the ability to pay for such care.
- (3) The health care system must be transparent in design, efficient in operation, and accountable to the people it serves. The state must ensure public participation in the design, implementation, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms of the health care system.
- (4) Primary care must be preserved and enhanced so that Vermonters have care available to them, preferably within their own communities. Other aspects of Vermont's health care infrastructure, including the educational and research missions of the state's academic medical center and other postsecondary educational institutions, the nonprofit missions of the community hospitals, and the critical access designation of rural hospitals, must be supported in such a way that all Vermonters, including those in rural areas, have access to necessary health services and that these health services are sustainable.
- (5) Every Vermonter should be able to choose his or her health care providers.
- (6) Vermonters should be aware of the costs of the health services they receive. Costs should be transparent and easy to understand.
- (7) Individuals have a personal responsibility to maintain their own health and to use health resources wisely, and all individuals should have a financial stake in the health services they receive.
- (8) The health care system must recognize the primacy of the relationship between patients and their health care practitioners, respecting the professional judgment of health care practitioners and the informed decisions of patients.

(9) Vermont's health delivery system must seek continuous improvement of health care quality and safety and of the health of the population and promote healthy lifestyles. The system therefore must be evaluated regularly for improvements in access, quality, and cost containment.

(10) Vermont's health care system must include mechanisms for containing all system costs and eliminating unnecessary expenditures, including by reducing administrative costs and by reducing costs that do not contribute to efficient, high-quality health services or improve health outcomes. Efforts to reduce overall health care costs should identify sources of excess cost growth.

(11) The financing of health care in Vermont must be sufficient, fair, predictable, transparent, sustainable, and shared equitably.

(12) The system must consider the effects of payment reform on individuals and on health care professionals and suppliers. It must enable health care professionals to provide, on a solvent basis, effective and efficient health services that are in the public interest.

(13) Vermont's health care system must operate as a partnership between consumers, employers, health care professionals, hospitals, and the state and federal government.

(14) State government must ensure that the health care system satisfies the principles expressed in this section.