

**ACMHA Research
2008 Presidential Candidates**

The early phases of the 2008 presidential campaign portend a strong focus on health care in the upcoming election. What seems to be generally absent from the campaigns of each of the presidential candidates (with three exceptions) is any focus on mental health or substance use care. Below, we provide summaries of the health care positions for each of the presidential candidates. We will update these summaries as the campaign progresses. A special thanks to Thom Bornemann and The Carter Center for providing these.

REPUBLICANS

1. *U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback (Kansas)*

Health Care:

"Supports the creation of regulatory competition among states, resulting in lower health insurance costs for the uninsured."

Lifetime Electronic Medical Records: I am the sponsor of a bill that would offer patients both ownership and control over their personal health information and ensure that personal health information is not used by third parties without the consent of the patient. This proposal would also offer patients debit-like cards containing their private and portable personal health information.

Association Health Plans: Another issue we must address is health care options for small businesses -- small businesses employ nearly two-thirds of the working uninsured population. We must allow small-business owners and others to form Association Health Plans (AHPs), which are similar to the large health care purchasing-pools that corporations and labor unions already enjoy.

Price Transparency and Health Savings Accounts (HSAs): To empower consumers who use HSAs or are paying out-of-pocket for care, consumers should be able to shop around for the best deal by having access to a list of prices for common health care services.

Mental Health:

No stated position

2. *U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel (Nebraska)*

Health Care:

Called together a commission to report on the transformation of US health care. The Commission's vision for transformation included:

- access to basic health care for all Americans
- delivery of safe, evidence-based, high quality care
- emphasis on care coordination, and prevention of disease and disability
- accountability by all participants

Mental Health:

No stated position.

3. *Fmr. Gov. Mitt Romney (Massachusetts)*

Health Care:

For "extending health insurance to all Americans, not through a government program or new taxes, but through market reforms."

Mental Health:

No stated position

4. *Fmr. Gov. Mike Huckabee (Arkansas)*

Health Care:

"I advocate policies that would encourage the private sector to continue to seek innovative ways to bring down costs and improve the market for health care services. I also value the states' role as laboratories for new market-based approaches and I would encourage those efforts. As President, I would work with the private sector, Congress, health care providers and other concerned parties to lead a complete overhaul of our health care system, not more of the same, paid for by Uncle Sam at the expense of hard-working families."

Mental Health:

No stated position.

5. *U.S. Sen. John McCain (Arizona)*

Health Care

He issues statements in support of improving aspects of the healthcare system, including prescription drug programs for seniors, expanding health insurance to uninsured children, implementing better health care for veterans, improving patient choice and access to doctors, significantly reducing the power of HMOs, and introducing more tax-deductible health costs and limits on malpractice. However, he has no substantive or actionable policy suggestions.

McCain believes that these issues are most central to the healthcare debate:

1. Put patients and doctors in charge of their own health care, not HMO bureaucrats
2. Improve access to affordable health care
3. Choice of doctors to meet health care needs
4. Guaranteed access to emergency care
5. Continuity of care when employers change
6. Doctors must be able to communicate openly and fully with their patients
7. A free and fair grievance process in the event an HMO denies medical care, including relief in the courts.

McCain supports the following principles regarding tax support of health care:

- Allow small business owners & the self-employed to have the same deductibility for health costs
- Expand eligibility for tax-free medical savings accounts

- Establish limits on the amount of damages awarded in medical malpractice lawsuits.

Mental Health

No stated position.

6. *Fmr. Gov. and Fmr. U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson (Wisconsin)*

Health Care

Gov. Thompson does not support the idea of a government-run healthcare system, and his principal belief is that the U.S. system should focus on preventive medicine, instead of curative medicine. He intends to propose requiring the states to organize purchasing pools among the uninsured. These pools would provide health insurance for families and would allow for the negotiation of better prices for care for the uninsured.

As U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), Thompson "led the way in rebuilding our nation's crumbling public health infrastructure after 9/11. He worked tirelessly to provide prescription drug coverage to our nation's seniors," through the implementation of the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA). During his term, he also served as Chairman of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria.

He is also an advocate of electronic record systems as a means to overcome the burden of paper files, save money, reduce medical errors, and create a more efficient healthcare system.

Mental Health

As the former Secretary of HHS, he worked with Curie, the administrator of SAMHSA in 2003 to respond to the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. He issued a statement advocating for a "thorough review and assessment of this report with the goal of implementing appropriate steps to strengthen our mental health system....Our challenge is to build a mental health care system that is both consumer and family driven and focused on recovery and resilience." Currently, he is President of Logistics Health, Inc., a company that provides mental health assessments on troops returning from wartime deployments, among many other activities.

He wrote a "message" in *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General 1999*, in which he addressed the importance of understanding and eliminating the racial and ethnic disparities in receiving mental health treatment.

7. *Fmr. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich*

Health Care

He believes that a lack of reliable healthcare is the "largest problem in American domestic policy." He does *not* support large, centralized healthcare systems, and he wants to shift to a new sustainable system that is knowledge-intensive, quality-oriented, and individual-focused, because the present system is costing too much in lives and in dollars. He is in support of a full transformation requiring "real change," not just "tweaking at the margins." Additionally, he's more concerned with prevention and wellness education than with crisis care.

(<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=23429>).

During his 20 years in Congress, before becoming Speaker of the House, he was committed to improving the U.S. healthcare system. He co-chaired the Republican Task Force on Health, on which he worked to improve Medicare, increase the investment in medical research, and pass the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reform act for better access to new medications.

In 2003, he founded the Center for Health Transformation, which is a mix of public and private sector healthcare leaders committed to revising the health system.

He is also an advocate of electronic medical records, and cites the fact that millions of paper records were washed away during Katrina.

Mental Health

No stated position.

DEMOCRATS

1. *Gov. Bill Richardson (New Mexico)*

Health Care:

THE RICHARDSON APPROACH:

1. Open up existing sources of affordable, portable coverage to more Americans:
 - Working families and small businesses will be able to purchase coverage through the Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan.
 - Americans 55+ will be able to purchase coverage through Medicare. Seniors and persons with disabilities will also receive all of their care through Medicare, rather than multiple, uncoordinated, inadequate programs, as they do now.
 - Lower-income Americans will obtain affordable coverage through expanded Medicaid and State Child Health Insurance (SCHIP) programs.
 - Veterans will get access to the high-quality care they deserve, when they need it, without bureaucratic hassles.
2. Help families pay for coverage:
 - An advance refundable tax credit based on income will help families obtain coverage through the FEHBP or Medicare.
3. Provide relief from high health costs by:
 - Passing a Medical Borrower's Fairness Act to provide immediate relief to families forced to borrow to pay for medical expenses.
 - Streamlining health care administration through common forms, common reporting requirements, and widespread use of health IT.
 - Investing in prevention by addressing the root causes of chronic diseases.
 - Improving quality of care through payment systems that reward performance

Mental Health:

No stated position.

2. *Sen. Hillary Clinton (New York)*

Health Care:

- "Expand SCHIP so middle class families can be covered or buy into the same plan."
- "Universal Health Care"
- "Children's Health First Act: Making health care coverage available for every child in America."

Mental Health:

No stated position.

3. *Fmr. Sen. John Edwards (North Carolina)*

Health Care:

Under the Edwards Plan:

- Families without insurance will get coverage at an affordable price.
- Families with insurance will pay less and get more security and choices.
- Businesses and other employers will find it cheaper and easier to insure their workers.

The Edwards Plan achieves universal coverage by:

- Requiring businesses and other employers to either cover their employees or help finance their health insurance.
- Making insurance affordable by creating new tax credits, expanding Medicaid and SCHIP, reforming insurance laws, and taking innovative steps to contain health care costs.
- Creating regional "Health Markets" to let every American share the bargaining power to purchase an affordable, high-quality health plan, increase choices among insurance plans, and cut costs for businesses offering insurance.

Mental Health:

"All plans offered through "Health Markets" will include comprehensive benefits, including full mental health benefits."

4. *Sen. Joe Biden (Delaware)*

Health Care:

Joe Biden believes we need to take three steps to contain the cost of health care: modernize the system, simplify the system and reduce errors. He supports the transition to secure electronic records so that people can provide their doctors and nurses with vital medical information in real time. He believes there should be a uniform, efficient system to submit claims.

Joe Biden believes the path toward a 21st century health care system starts with the most vulnerable in our society. He would expand health insurance for children and relieve families and businesses of the burden of expensive catastrophic cases. He supports states that are pursuing innovative alternatives to make sure that everyone has access to health care and believes we should use data from these states to evaluate what works best in providing affordable access to health care for all.

Mental Health:

No stated position.

5. *U.S. Sen. Obama (Illinois)*

Health Care

He believes firmly that health care should be a right for everyone, not a privilege for the few. Senator Obama is a member of the Medicaid Working Group, and has voted to preserve and strengthen both Medicare and Medicaid at every opportunity. He has voted to restore funding to these programs and has voted against budgets that cut these programs.

Senator Obama is particularly concerned about the Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Program and its effect on our nation's elderly and disabled. Specifically, he is concerned about the difficulty encountered when enrolling and choosing among a large number of plans (more than 40 in Illinois); the restrictions on changing plan selection after enrollment; the prohibition against negotiating for the best drug price or discounts, and the high costs of the program for seniors.

Health Care Items that Senator Obama has drafted and/or introduced:

-National MEDiC Act, which promotes patient safety initiatives, including early disclosure and compensation to patients injured by medical errors.

-Hospital Quality Report Card Act, which will use federal hospital quality reporting requirements to inform and assist patients and other consumers in making their health care decisions

-Federal Employees Health Benefits Program Efficiency Act, which would leverage the federal government's purchasing power to encourage increased adoption of technology by participating health plans. He believes that greater use of health information technology can contain costs and improve the efficiency of our health care system.

Health Care Items that Senator Obama has sponsored or cosponsored:

-Co-sponsor of the Medicare Informed Choice Act, which would have extended enrollment without penalty and allowed for a one-time plan change during the first year of the plan.

-Lead Democratic sponsor of the **Microbicide Development Act**, which encourages scientific leadership on this issue and strengthens research and development programs at the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Mental Health

No stated position. However, in February he introduced (with Senator McCaskill) the Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act, and pushed for the passage of the bill in late March. It would have provided \$103 million in funding for additional caseworkers and mental health counselors, a women's mental health treatment program, and a comprehensive mental health study of returning soldiers. Republicans rejected the bill.

He also serves on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, which is a committee with jurisdiction over many disability issues. This is a unique opportunity to be a key player in the policy debates to come, including over long-term care services, services in our schools, and the reauthorization of the Developmental Disabilities Act.