



Alaska Health Care Commission
CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS
from 2009, 2010, 2011



I. Ensure the best available evidence is used for making decisions

Support clinicians and patients to make clinical decisions based on high grade medical evidence regarding effectiveness and efficiency of testing and treatment options. Apply evidence-based principles in the design of health insurance plans and benefits. *(Recommendations: Page 2)*

II. Enhance quality and efficiency of care on the front-end

Strengthen the role of primary care providers, and give patients and their clinicians better tools for making health care decisions. Improve coordination of care for patients with multiple providers, and care management for patients with chronic health conditions. Improve Alaska's trauma system. *(Recommendations: Pages 3-5)*

III. Increase price and quality transparency

Provide Alaskans with information on how much their health care costs and how outcomes compare so they can become informed consumers and make informed choices. Provide clinicians, payers and policy makers with information needed to make informed health care decisions. *(Recommendations: Page 6)*

IV. Pay for value

Design new payment structures that incentivize quality, efficiency and effectiveness. Support multi-payer payment reform initiatives to improve purchasing power for the consumer and minimize the burden on health care providers. *(Recommendations: Page 6)*

V. Build the foundation of a sustainable health care system

Create the information infrastructure required for maintaining and sharing electronic health information and for conducting health care analytics to support improved clinical decisions, personal health choices, and public health. Ensure there is an appropriate supply and distribution of health care workers. *(Recommendations: Pages 7-9)*

VI. Focus on prevention

Create the conditions that support Alaskans to exercise personal responsibility for living healthy lifestyles. High priorities include reducing obesity rates, increasing immunization rates, and improving behavioral health status. *(Recommendations: Page 10)*



Alaska Health Care Commission
CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS
from 2009, 2010, 2011



I. Ensure the best available evidence is used for making decisions

Evidence-Based Medicine

1. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature encourage and support State health care programs to engage in the application of high grade evidence-based medicine in making determinations about benefit design (covered services, prior authorization requirements, patient cost-sharing differentials) and provider payment methods. (2010)
2. The Commission recommends that the Governor require State health care programs to coordinate development and application of evidence-based medicine policies to create a consistent approach to supporting improved quality and efficiency in Alaska's health care system. (2010)
3. The Commission recommends that the Governor require State health care programs to involve health care providers and consumers in decision making related to the application of evidence-based medicine to public policy. The purpose of such involvement is to support a transparent process leading to policies that avoid restricting access to appropriate treatment and that foster informed discussions between patients and clinicians in which individualized, evidence-based choices improve the quality of health care. (2010)
4. The Commission recommends that the Governor direct State health care programs to seek to incorporate data on patient compliance in developing new provider payment methods and benefit design. (2010)
5. The Commission recommends that the Alaska Department of Health & Social Services implement a web-based data system for public health information. (2010)



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CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS
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II. Enhance quality and efficiency of care on the front-end

Primary Care Innovation

- The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature aggressively pursue development of patient-centric care models through payment reform, removal of statutory and regulatory barriers, and implementation of pilot projects. Development of pilot projects should include definition of the patient-centric model, identification of performance standards and measures, and payment models that are outcome-based. (2009)

Patient-Centered Primary Care

1. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska recognize the value of a strong patient-centered primary care system by supporting appropriate reimbursement for primary care services. (2011)
2. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska support state policies that promote the central tenet of patient-centered primary care – that it is a model of care based on a continuous healing relationship between the clinical team and the patient. (2011)
3. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska and other entities planning a patient-centered primary care transformation initiative incorporate the following strategies the Commission found to be common to start-up of successful programs studied as models. These successful models started with:
 - a) Financial investment by the initiating payer organization (whether public or private).
 - b) Strong medical leadership and management involved in planning and development.
 - c) A collaborative partnership between the payers and clinical providers.
 - d) A vision concerned with improving patient care, followed by identification of principles, definitions, criteria for participation, and tools and measures.
 - e) A focus on local (i.e., practice-level) flexibility and empowerment.
 - f) A phased approach to implementation.
 - g) A tiered approach to managing patient populations. (2011)
4. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska and other entities implementing a patient-centered primary care transformation initiative include the following attributes the Commission found to be common to successful programs studied as models:
 - a) **Resources** provided to primary care practices to support improved access and care coordination capabilities.
 - b) **New tools and skill development opportunities** provided to primary care practices to support culture and practice transformation.
 - c) **Shared learning environments** for clinical teams to support development of emergent knowledge through practice and dissemination of new knowledge.



Alaska Health Care Commission
CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS
from 2009, 2010, 2011



- d) **Timely data** provided to primary care practices to support patient population management and clinical quality improvement, including centralized analytical and reporting capability and capacity.
 - e) **Infrastructure support** for medical guidance, including a medical director for clinical management and improvement, case managers, pharmacists, and behavioral health clinicians.
 - f) **A system of review** that includes both implementation monitoring by initiative partners and evaluation of initiative outcomes by an independent third-party. (2011)
5. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska support a patient-centered medical home (PCMH) initiative, recognizing:
- a) Front-end investment will be required for implementation, and it may take two to three years before a return on investment will be realized;
 - b) Collaboration between State programs that pay for health care, other health care payers and the primary care clinicians who will be responsible for implementing this model is essential to success; and,
 - c) Patient-centered primary care development is not the magic bullet for health care reform, but is an essential element in transforming Alaska's health care system so that it better serves patients, better supports providers, and delivers better value. (2011)

Alaska's Trauma System

1. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska support a strong trauma system for Alaska that:
- Is comprehensive and coordinated, including:
 - Public health system capacity for
 - studying the burden of injury in the local population
 - designing and implementing injury prevention programs
 - supporting the development and exercise of local and statewide emergency preparedness and response plans
 - Emergency medical service capacity for effective pre-hospital care for triage, stabilization and coordination of safe transportation of critically injured patients
 - Trauma center care for treatment of critically injured patients
 - Rehabilitation services for optimizing recovery from injuries
 - Disability services to support life management for individuals left with a permanent disability due to an injury
 - Is integrated, aligning existing resources to efficiently and effectively achieve improved patient outcomes.
 - Is designed to meet the unique requirements of the population served.
 - Provides evidence-based medical care to achieve the best possible outcomes for the patient.
 - Provides seamless transition for the patient between the different phases of care. (2011)



Alaska Health Care Commission
CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS
from 2009, 2010, 2011



2. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska support continued implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2008 consultation report by the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma, including achievement and maintenance of certification of trauma center status of Alaskan hospitals. (2011)



Alaska Health Care Commission
CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS
from 2009, 2010, 2011



III. Increase price and quality transparency

1. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska encourage full participation in the Hospital Discharge Database by Alaska's hospitals. (2011)
2. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska study the need for and feasibility of an All-Payers Claims Database. (2011)

IV. Pay for value

1. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska utilize payment policies for improving the value of health care spending – for driving improved quality, efficiency and outcomes for each health care dollar spent in Alaska – recognizing that:
 - a. Local payment reform solutions are required for Alaska's health care markets
 - b. Payment reform may not result in immediate cost savings, but efforts must begin immediately
 - c. Payment reform is not the magic bullet for health care reform, but is one essential element in transforming Alaska's health care system so that it better serves patients, and delivers better value for payers and purchasers. (2011)
2. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska take a phased approach to payment reform, revising payment structures to support primary care transformation as a first step in utilizing payment policies for improving value in Alaska's health care system. (2011)
3. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska develop health data collection and analysis capacity as a tool for quality improvement and payment reform. Data collection, analysis and use decisions should involve clinicians, payers, and patients. (2011)
4. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska support efforts by state officials responsible for purchasing health care services with public funds to collaborate on the development of common purchasing policies. These collaborative efforts should include key stakeholders, and should be used as leverage to drive improved quality, effectiveness, efficiency and cost of care in Alaska's health care system. These efforts should endeavor to engage commercial payers and federal health care programs in alignment of payment policies in a multi-payer approach to minimize the burden on health care providers. (2011)



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V. Build the foundation of a sustainable health care system

A. Health Information Infrastructure

Health Information Technology - General

- The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature take an aggressive approach to supporting adoption, utilization, and potential funding of health information technology, including health information exchange, electronic health records and telemedicine/telehealth that promise to increase efficiency and protect privacy. (2009)

Health Information Technology – HIE & EHRs

1. The Commission recommends that the Governor direct the Department of Health & Social Services to explore options for assisting providers (particularly smaller primary care practices and individual primary care providers) with adoption of electronic health record systems. (2009)
2. The Commission recommends that the Governor ensure Alaska’s statewide health information exchange supports providers who have not yet adopted their own electronic health record system by facilitating identification and purchase of systems that are interoperable with the state exchange. (2009)
3. The Commission recommends that the Governor ensure that HIT is utilized to protect the public’s health. Alaska’s health information exchange should connect with electronic public health reporting systems to enable real-time disease reporting and rapid identification of public health threats. (2009)
4. The Commission recommends that the Governor ensure that data available through the statewide health information exchange is utilized to identify opportunities for administrative efficiencies, coordination and optimization of care, and health care quality and safety improvement. (2009)
5. The Commission recommends that the 2010 Alaska Health Care Commission track the development of the Alaska Statewide Health Information Exchange, Alaska’s new Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS), and the use of ARRA funds for electronic health record deployment; and the Commission should continue to identify current issues, policy choices and recommendations based on these developments. (2009)
6. The Commission recommends that the Governor designate a statewide entity with the responsibility for ensuring broad implementation of health information security and privacy protections. The entity should participate in on-going efforts at the national level to identify security and privacy standards, should oversee application of those standards to Alaska’s statewide health information exchange, and should identify a process for Alaskan patients to opt out of participation in the health information exchange. (2009)



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CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS
from 2009, 2010, 2011



Health Information Technology – Telehealth/Telemedicine

1. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska legislature work with federal and local partners to ensure all Alaskan communities have access to broadband telecommunications infrastructure that provides the connectivity and bandwidth necessary to optimize use of health information technologies. (2009)
2. The Commission recommends that the Governor direct the Alaska Department of Health & Social Services to investigate innovative reimbursement mechanisms for telemedicine-delivered services; test new payment methodologies through Medicaid, and work with other payers to encourage adoption of successful methodologies. (2009)

B. Health Workforce

Workforce - General

1. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature maintain health care workforce development as a priority on Alaska's health care reform and economic development agendas. (2009)
2. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature explore strategies for strengthening the pipeline of potential future Alaska health care workers. (2009)
3. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature explore strategies for ensuring Alaska's health care workforce continues to be innovative and adaptive, and that it is responsive to emerging patient care models. (2009)
4. The Commission recommends that the Governor designate a single entity with the responsibility for coordinating all health care workforce development planning activities in and for Alaska. Coordination and collaboration of funders, policymakers and stakeholders in workforce planning and development efforts should be encouraged to the greatest extent possible. (2009)
5. The Commission recommends that the 2010 Alaska Health Care Commission continue studying health care workforce needs in coordination with other organizations and coalitions addressing this issue, and identify recommendations for additional improvements. (2009)



**Alaska Health Care Commission
CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS
from 2009, 2010, 2011**



Workforce – Physician Supply

6. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature target the state’s limited financial resources invested in physician workforce development to strengthening the supply of primary care physicians. (2009)
7. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature support development and maintenance of an educational loan repayment and direct financial incentive program in support of recruitment and retention of primary care physicians and mid-level practitioners. (2009)
8. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature support the continued expansion of the WWAMI program. Future expansion should be supported as resources allow. (2009)
9. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature support graduate medical education for primary care and behavioral medicine. State financial support should continue for on-going operation of the Alaska Family Medicine Residency Program, and should be appropriated for the planning and development of in-state residency programs for pediatrics, psychiatry, and primary care internal medicine. (2009)
10. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature ask Alaska’s congressional delegation to pursue federal policies to address equity in the allocation and distribution of Medicare Graduate Medical Education (GME) residency slots. The exclusion of new programs is not equitable, and there should be heavier weighting for primary care GME and for shortage areas. (2009)
11. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature explore strategies for improving the primary care delivery model and utilizing “physician extender” occupations as an additional approach to addressing the primary care physician shortage. (2009)

C. Statewide Leadership

1. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature invest in the state health policy infrastructure required to study, understand, and make recommendations to respond to the implications of national health care reform for Alaska. (2009)
2. The Commission recommends that the Alaska Legislature establish an Alaska Health Care Commission in statute, similar in size to the Commission established under Administrative Order #246, to provide a focal point for sustained and comprehensive planning and policy recommendations for health care delivery and financing reform, and to ensure transparency and accountability for the public in the process. (2009)



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VI. Focus on Prevention

Healthy Lifestyles

- The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature investigate and support additional strategies to encourage and support healthy lifestyles, including strategies to create cultures of wellness in any setting. (2009)

Obesity in Alaska

- The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska implement evidence-based programs to address the growing rate of Alaskans who are overweight or obese. First efforts should focus on nutrition and physical activity for children and young people and raise public awareness of the health risks associated with being overweight and obese. (2011)

Immunization against Vaccine-Preventable Disease

- The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska ensure the state's immunization program is adequately funded and supported, and that health care providers give priority to improving immunization rates in order to protect Alaskans from serious preventable diseases and their complications. (2011)

Population-based Prevention & Behavioral Health

1. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska support efforts to foster development of patient centered primary care models in Alaska that:
 - Integrate behavioral health services with primary physical health care services in common settings appropriate to the patient population.
 - Assure coordination between primary care and higher level behavioral health services.
 - Include screening for the patient population using evidence-based tools to screen for
 - A history of adverse childhood events
 - Substance abuse
 - Depression(2011)
2. The Alaska Health Care Commission recommends the State of Alaska develop with input from health care providers new payment methodologies for state-supported behavioral health services to facilitate integration of primary physical health care services with behavioral health care services. (2011)



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Access to Primary Care for Medicare Patients - 2009

1. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature improve the supply of primary care providers in order to enable increased access to care for Medicare patients by:
 - Supporting a student loan repayment and financial incentive program for primary care providers practicing in Alaska and serving Medicare patients (and including other service requirements deemed necessary to meet the needs of the underserved);
 - Supporting development of a primary care internal medicine residency program;
 - Supporting WWAMI program expansion as resources allow; and,
 - Supporting mid-level practitioner development.
2. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature explore strategies for removing barriers to the development of designated Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs), facilitating development through state application for federal shortage designations for Medicare populations and supporting planning for new and expanded FQHCs/RHCs.
3. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature work with Alaska's Congressional delegation to improve Medicare's reimbursement scheme to ensure the sustainability of care to Medicare patients.
4. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature ask Alaska's congressional delegation to pursue federal policies to redesign the Medicare audit process so that it focuses more on identification and prosecution of fraudulent practices than on billing errors. Reported financial incentives for audit contractors should be eliminated and replaced with performance measures. Concern over billing errors should be addressed through provider training and performance reports, not through audit processes designed to weed out fraud and abuse.
5. The Commission recommends that the Governor and Alaska Legislature commission an analysis comparing Medicare to Medicaid and private insurance administrative requirements, including recommendations for streamlining public insurance administrative procedures to make them more user-friendly.
6. The Commission recommends that the Governor facilitate development of PACE programs in Alaska by directing the Department of Health & Social Services to submit a State Plan Amendment to the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to add PACE as a Medicaid service, and to identify and remove barriers to development of PACE programs.