

Advancing Health Coverage and Public Benefits – Position Statement

Introduction and Background

For many years, Caring for Colorado has partnered to increase health coverage and access to care for people in the state of Colorado. We have supported coalitions, advocacy and policy analysis and engaged with decision makers to expand Medicaid and CHP+. At times, we have been very active in pushing for specific benefits related to oral health, behavioral health, pregnancy and children; at other times, we have advocated for increased population-level coverage. We have also worked to increase public funding for core elements of Colorado’s health care safety net, including federally qualified health centers, rural health clinics, behavioral health providers, school-based health centers and loan repayment programs.

As we advance our new vision and purpose and deepen our focus on health equity, we need to broaden our approach to address safety net programs tied to the health and well-being of children and families.

Colorado’s safety net consists of various federally- and state-funded programs which directly ensure that children and families have regular access to health care, nutritious food, safe housing and other basic needs. Some of the most important programs include:

- Health insurance programs, including Health First Colorado (Medicaid) and Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+)
- Food security programs, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
- Cash assistance programs, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) and other programs
- Subsidy programs, including Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) and housing assistance programs

Alignment with Caring for Colorado Foundation’s Purpose, Values and/or Focus Areas

Caring for Colorado’s vision is that Colorado’s children and families are happy, healthy and thriving. Our purpose is to create equity in health, well-being and opportunity for Colorado’s children and families.

Caring for Colorado Foundation recognizes public benefit programs as vitally important to the safety net supporting the health and well-being of children and families in Colorado. They play a critical role in reducing poverty, improving health outcomes and strengthening communities. Among other benefits, these programs can provide some degree of economic security.

Caring for Colorado Foundation's Position

- Colorado is stronger when all people realize stability, safety, health and opportunity. Public benefits help to support this goal, particularly for children and families facing systemic barriers to health and well-being. Access to the services covered by public benefit programs is just as important as the programs themselves.
- We believe it is important to protect and expand state and local government investment levels to maintain and improve access to safety net public benefit programs, including health insurance programs, food security programs, cash assistance programs and subsidy programs.
- Colorado families should be able to enroll and maintain participation in these programs within systems that respect their dignity and reduce unnecessary and burdensome requirements. Colorado families meeting the eligibility requirements for public benefit programs should not be prevented from accessing them. We support strategies to streamline eligibility determination, application and enrollment, and continuous eligibility processes for children and families.
- We support efforts to ensure that programs enforce comprehensive protections against discrimination and maintain essential benefits so that all eligible individuals and families can access the resources they need to support their health and well-being.

Potential Use of this Statement

Caring for Colorado supports safety net policies and programs that drive equity in health, well-being and opportunity for all Colorado's children and families. The foundation will recognize this position in public comments and factor this position into decisions to join partnerships and/or collective actions, when weighing in on public policy, when making investment decisions and when developing strategies.

References

Colorado Children's Campaign. Kid's Count in Colorado. (September 6, 2019) Retrieved from: <https://www.coloradokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-KidsCount-9-4-19-Low-Res.pdf>.
Colorado Fiscal Institute. Defending the Colorado Way of Life. (August 24, 2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.coloradofiscal.org/>.