

Health Care Is a Human Right

A Human Rights Approach to Health Care Reform



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Back to Basics:

What Do We Want from Our Health Care System?

- Everyone can be as healthy as possible
- Everyone gets the care they need
- Access to care does not depend on payment
- No one faces barriers to care, or differences in quality of care, based on income, employment, gender, race, immigration status, or any other factor
- The people oversee how the health system meets their needs



What's Wrong with Market-based Health Care?

- ❑ **Commercialization:** care is a commodity sold through insurance plans
- ❑ **Profiteering:** people must buy products from an insurance industry incentivized to maximize profit, not care
- ❑ **Rationed access to care:** access based on payment, employment, age, immigration status, geographical location
- **Exclusion and inequity:**

System has separate tiers for different categories of people receiving different levels of care

How Does the ACA Measure Up?

Principles	ACA approach	Human Rights approach
Universality	Expanding access through a managed market with competing private insurers	Including everyone in a universal, publicly financed system
Equity	Partially subsidizing limited private and safety net coverage	Providing all care independent of payment, free at the point of service
Accountability	Some new but limited regulations for insurance companies	Enabling public oversight by treating health care as a public good

Using Human Rights to Move Beyond the ACA

1. Many people are left out
2. Not all needed care is accessible
3. Many cannot afford to get the care they need



Vision and Principles



UNIVERSALITY

Everyone is included and can meet their needs



EQUITY

Everyone contributes what they can and gets what they need



TRANSPARENCY

All information related to decision-making should be clear and accessible to all



ACCOUNTABILITY

The people are able to oversee and guide how government is protecting and fulfilling our rights



PARTICIPATION

Everyone has a meaningful say in how decisions that impact us all get made

The Role of Human Rights Principles

Human rights principles serve as:

- ❑ a tool for analyzing structural problems and solutions
- ❑ a framework for policy demands
- ❑ a values-based approach to changing the debate
- ❑ a compass for a unified movement for social change



Movement Building with the Right to Health Care

Campaigns in Vermont, Maryland, Maine, Pennsylvania:

- ❑ Reach broad constituencies and grow base
- ❑ Build and sustain collective engagement and leadership
- ❑ Build unity and alignment (across constituencies and issues)
- ❑ Raise expectations (consciousness)
- ❑ Build power



The Transformative Power of Value-Based Campaigns

- ❑ **Value-based:** health care advocacy as a struggle to put people's needs & rights over technocratic or corporate interests.
- ❑ **Consciousness-raising:** people analyze their position and power in the health care system and in society as a whole.
- ❑ **Collectivity beyond self-interest:** from interest group actions to a broader struggle based on shared values.
- ❑ **Transformational:** from advocacy for a specific policy to a struggle for a bigger, unifying vision, guided by principles.

Vermont as a Model

After years of organizing by the **Healthcare Is a Human Right Campaign**, Vermont is the first U.S. state...

- ✓ with a law for a universal, publicly financed health care system
- ✓ with rights-based principles in law
- ✓ with a commitment to providing health care as a public good



Key Lessons from the Vermont Model



- identify people's **needs** and elevate the voices of the crisis
- claim **rights** and recognize government **obligations**
- support people's **agency** in effecting political change
- foster **unity** across issues and communities
- start changing **power** relations

Movement Building

The Health Care Domino Theory

- ❑ Develop rights-based organizing model
- ❑ Win state-level victory
- ❑ Support replication/adaptation of model
- ❑ Build network & catalyze national movement
- ❑ Win in a critical mass of states
- ➔ Change federal policy





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