

**Coos Economic Action Plan  
Health Care Technical Review Committee  
Recommendation Two: Coverage for Coos**

**Action Step Recommendation Statement:**

To build on an initiative developed in 2002-2003 by the North Country Health Consortium with support from Family Resource Center, Coos County Family Health Services, AV Community Partners (then known as the Berlin Health Consortium), and Coos County businesses to develop a community based approach to expanded health care coverage to uninsured workers to be called “Coverage for Coos.” The impetus for this initiative came from a community health plan developed in Muskegon County, Michigan, called Access Health, which has been in operation since 1999. Access Health is known as a “three share plan” in which employers and employees each pay 30 percent of the cost of the program with the community itself paying the remainder.

The components of such a plan could include:

- A community governing board that would be responsible for establishing local priorities and allocating health resources.
- A comprehensive integrated delivery system that would build a medical care system with new organizational arrangements and financial incentives
- An integrated administrative structure that allows for a single set of rules and regulations and would allow for better monitoring of health care system performance
- A health information system that allows health care providers and human service agencies to share information and monitor quality of care, costs and benefits and consumer satisfaction.
- Community wide coverage of health care for all residents.

Introduction of such a community health care initiative into Coos County would require short-mid-and long-term activities including:

**Short-term:**

- Determine which organizations should be represented on the community governing board
- Create a board based on recommendations with commitments to support initiative
- Determine the characteristics of the population to be served, i.e., target population including numbers in need
- Launch a community wide series of educational forums so that residents of Coos County, local businesses and others are aware of initiative.
- Develop consensus for initiative

- Initiate a public information campaign focused on the NH legislature, appropriate executive branch agencies, insurers, and private sector funders to promote initiative

#### **Mid-term:**

- Develop the specific components of the model to be piloted in Coos County
- Explore national funding initiatives for support, i.e., Kellogg Foundation and Robert Wood Johnson Foundations
- Initiate program
- Evaluation of all program components at six months and one year into program.

#### **Long-term**

- Advocacy for policy shifts to address overall need to cover uninsured adults using existing initiatives such as the RWJ state coverage initiative.

### **Justification of Recommendation**

Geographical, cultural and economic barriers to appropriate levels of health care exist for many residents of Coos County. For example, less than 50 percent of the age 19 to 64 population has access to employer sponsored health insurance coverage. These numbers are exacerbated by closures in recent years of the paper mills in the Berlin/Gorham and Groveton areas as well as sky rocketing costs of employer-sponsored insurance. Many in Coos County either own or work for a small business. Neither employer nor employee can afford to pay the premiums for health insurance and are, accordingly, uninsured.

A correlation exists between access to health insurance and health status. The Coos County population suffers from cardio-artery disease at a level twice the state average. In addition prevalence of type two diabetes, cancer, as well as respiratory disease and others are much higher than state and national averages. Some of these discrepancies can be attributed to life style; but most experts agree that lack of access to primary and preventive care – access which is severely limited to those without health insurance – is a major contributor to these health status indicators. Improving access to health care through a community oriented health care plan directed at uninsured adults would ultimately improve these health status indicators.

### **Who**

The North Country Health Consortium would re-establish the partnership initiated in 2002-2003 to develop Coverage for Coos” including Consortium member organizations, the Family Resource Center, AV Community Partners and Coos County businesses to implement this initiative.

### **Timeline for Implementation**

Work on the short-term activities could begin as soon as funding is secured and partners have agreed to participate. Mid-term and long-term tasks would take place in the second half of year one and into years two and three.

**Measures of success**

- Community Board established
- Goals delineated
- Pilot program initiated
- Target population served
- Health status of target population improved

**Appendix**

Issue Brief. The Muskegon Access Health “Three-Share” Plan: A Case History