

**ECONOMIC BARRIERS**  
Program Year 2010

**GOAL: “To reduce economic barriers to accessing health and health care for the people of New Hampshire”**

Health is a product of where and how we live and work, access to care, individual and collective behavior, and family and community history. In this mix, economic status has a far greater impact on health than our egalitarian society would like to admit. Economic barriers to health include lack of access to care, safe housing, healthy food, and physical activity. Those with access to the healthcare system can find it complex and confusing: quality varies and the payment system is far from clear. Our health system is showing signs of stress, as the pillars of funding struggle under the weight of increasing premiums and escalating costs to public programs. Systems-level change and a step-by-step approach are needed to address spiraling costs in a system that leaves many out and doesn't always promote health, prevent disease, or provide high-quality care. We also need to understand the systems that promote health and wealth for some in our society and not others.



**Investment to date: \$6,773,496**

**Number of grants to date: 128**

**Theme Outcomes**

- A comprehensive and sustainable body of science- and evidence-based knowledge about economic barriers in New Hampshire, New England, and in the United States
- A cost-effective health system in New Hampshire in which health care and coverage are available, affordable, and of high quality
- Strengthened state and local policies that reduce the impact of economic barriers on health and access to health care in New Hampshire

**Theme Strategies**

- Supporting the development and dissemination of data/information/best practices about economic barriers in New Hampshire and in the United States
- Supporting communication, education, and advocacy efforts to increase awareness of and action on issues of economic access
- Developing and implementing new models to reduce the impact of economic barriers on health and access to health care
- Supporting local efforts to address economic barriers
- Supporting the effectiveness and sustainability of safety-net providers
- Supporting efforts to identify, test, and implement public policy options that increase the number of situations where public or private health coverage is available and affordable, while taking steps to contain costs and improve quality

**Overall Progress:** Working towards system-level change to reduce or eliminate economic barriers to health has led the Endowment to focus in several key areas:

- **Public opinion, policy, and health services research.** The Endowment has supported work to identify the scope of these issues in New Hampshire and look for opportunities to leverage change. Endowment-funded research benchmarks the state of the health care system in New Hampshire and the financial health of key sectors serving as our health-care safety net.
- **Public policy and public conversation.** The Endowment supports the New Hampshire Citizens Health Initiative, a collaborative effort to improve New Hampshire's health system, and NH Voices for Health, an advocacy coalition on health issues whose members represent more than 200,000 New Hampshire residents. We have also funded projects examining Medicaid, Healthy Kids, and health insurance coverage for workers involved in public works construction projects.
- **Testing new models, ideas, and approaches to assuring access to health and health care.** Funded projects include demonstrations on community-based care coordination, expansion of the New Hampshire Health Access Network provider base, and efforts to develop evidence-based prescriber education programs. We have also supported work to promote the development of medical homes in primary care settings in New Hampshire.
- **Assuring access for those who directly experience economic barriers to health.** Support has included grants to assure the financial sustainability of safety-net providers throughout the state, to convene a planning process for a health-professions forgivable-loan program, a website to help micro-entrepreneurs navigate their health coverage options (<http://www.nhbusinesshealthoptions.com>), and a community coalition in Manchester working to expand access and integrate primary care with oral and mental health care. The Endowment for Health has recently initiated a loan program for safety-net health providers to provide greater access to working capital.

#### **Current Funding Interests:**

Economic barriers to health and health care are among the most critical issues facing New Hampshire and the nation today, with an increased urgency in public conversation and action as we look at national and state health reform proposals. The Endowment is committed to moving toward systems-level change in the state, primarily by addressing the issues at a policy level. Grantmaking will focus largely on public policy initiatives, advocacy, applied research, and informed public conversation. We anticipate that the implementation of any national health reform efforts in New Hampshire will require an intensified focus on implantation at the state level that will assure access to a quality, cost-effective health system for all New Hampshire residents.

#### **The Endowment will particularly welcome:**

- Proposals that address policy-level projects focusing on systems change in linking cost, coverage, and quality in health care, especially those that help move the state forward in responding to national health reform efforts and those consistent with the work of the New Hampshire Citizens Health Initiative ([www.steppingupnh.org](http://www.steppingupnh.org)).
- Targeted project proposals that address gaps in research and those that address critical areas of concern related to economic access to health for our most vulnerable residents.
- Efforts that leverage federal funds or regional efforts to improve the transparency of the health system, reduce costs, and improve quality.
- The financial sustainability of the safety net will continue to be a focus for both responsive and strategic grantmaking.

The Program Director for the Economic Barriers theme is Jeanne Ryer at [JRyer@endowmentforhealth.org](mailto:JRyer@endowmentforhealth.org) or (603) 228-2448, Endowment for Health, 14 South St., Concord, NH 03301. A listing of Endowment Economic Barriers grants is available at [www.endowmentforhealth.org](http://www.endowmentforhealth.org)