

Joint Advocacy Agenda for a Healthy Delaware

First State Health Leaders Alliance

Delaware's leading health advocates are announcing an advocacy agenda to strengthen healthcare in the First State. The state's growing and aging population (currently sixth-oldest population in the nation and the eighth-fastest-growing population) will continue to increase the demand for a robust healthcare infrastructure. This first-ever joint agenda ushers in a new era of collaboration and coordination across sectors, emphasizing that solutions for healthcare are shared, not siloed.

The advocates have expertise across the healthcare continuum including nursing and physician practice, home care, facilities and hospitals. It is our hope that other healthcare organizations will join us as we embark on a new chapter of working together to make Delaware a national model for healthcare.

The eight-point plan highlights the importance of working together toward real solutions that meet the needs of Delaware's residents and healthcare community. That includes supporting efforts to address health workforce development, insurance reform, public health and emergency preparedness, workplace violence, and community needs driven by the social determinants of health.

Champions:

- Delaware Healthcare Association
- Delaware Nurses Association
- Medical Society of Delaware
- Delaware Association for Home & Community Care
- Delaware Health Care Facilities Association



Delaware Association for
Home & Community Care



Health Workforce Development

Delaware is experiencing healthcare workforce challenges and shortages across numerous health-related professions (e.g. primary care, behavioral health, home-based services, long-term care, and nursing). Together we must:

- Support comprehensive data collection of the healthcare workforce landscape to better define shortage professions and geographic areas.
- Target resources into incentives, including scholarships, preceptor supports and "earn-while-you-learn" programs, to help Delaware recruit, educate and retain healthcare workers in these needed professions and areas.
- Invest in programs that cultivate interest in health careers at a young age, increasing the pipeline for a robust and diverse healthcare workforce from within our state.

Reimbursement Rates

50% of Delawareans have government-sponsored health coverage (e.g. Medicare, Medicaid, Tricare) that reimburse providers at rates below the cost of care. Commercial insurance may also reimburse providers at insufficient levels for services ranging from primary care to behavioral health.

- Reimbursement for care provided by healthcare providers must cover the cost of care and ensure the sustainability of that care into the future.

Prior Authorization Reform

Prior authorization is a barrier that delays necessary patient care and can lead to patients abandoning their treatment, resulting in poor health outcomes. Prior authorizations also create significant administrative burdens for healthcare providers.

- Support legislation to reform the prior authorization process in Delaware to ease patient access to care and reduce the burden on the healthcare workforce.

Public Health / Emergency Preparedness

Health care providers must be ready to care for patients no matter the illness or condition. Part of this readiness includes preparing for hazards from pandemics to security threats. Together we must ensure:

- Continued planning, training and education efforts to enhance disaster preparedness and robust communication to avoid reactionary policies that may negatively impact our healthcare workforce or our patients.
- Enhanced collaboration across the care continuum to assure we are prepared to care for individuals regardless of their provider setting, with an emphasis on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable.

Workplace Violence

Healthcare workers experience significantly more workplace violence than other industries. These incidents are far too common, negatively impact well-being and contribute to caregivers leaving the healthcare profession at a time when we must do all we can to maintain a robust healthcare workforce.

- Work collaboratively to ensure a culture of safety, with violence mitigation and de-escalation strategies implemented across the healthcare system, while also making it clear to patients and families that intentionally injuring a healthcare worker is a felony offense in Delaware.

Removing Healthcare Barriers

There are healthcare services available for all in Delaware, but some may not be familiar with where to go or comfortable with seeking care. Others may have barriers and face inequities that prevent them from accessing the care they need.

- Promote health literacy, provide health services in underserved communities, and support the healthcare workforce to help build the trust in communities to help bridge trust barriers and ensure all are getting the care they need.
- Ensure that stakeholders, families and patients understand the duties, scope, responsibilities and limitations of their care providers.

Transitions of Care

Transitions of care refers to a patient's journey across the continuum of healthcare, moving from one care setting to another (e.g., hospital to home, hospital to rehab, rehab to long-term care, etc.). Research confirms that transitions of care are high-risk events and require coordinated communication and record handling.

- Enhance collaboration, communication and electronic health record integration that supports seamless and timely discharge/transition planning that includes both the sending and receiving facilities/agencies and the patient's support individuals.
- Increase support for utilization and case management resources and professionals across the care continuum that ensures patients are receiving the right care, at the right time, in the right setting.
- Modernize discharge planning opportunities based upon available and safe housing/settings, balancing individual rights and personal choice.

Affordable Housing

Access to affordable and sustained housing is a social driver of health that affects everyone. Affordable, accessible housing is a growing crisis in Delaware that needs a comprehensive approach and novel solutions. Affordable housing facilitates aging in place, health promotion and success, health workforce recruitment and retention, and community living for intellectually, developmentally and/or physically disabled Delawareans.

- Collaborate with stakeholders to address challenges and increase access to affordable housing for all Delawareans.
- Advocate for innovative solutions to housing shortages for older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Increase access to affordable housing for health care workers through public and private partnerships that focus on recruitment and retention of qualified professionals.