



## Small Group Discussion #1

### HOW DO WE GET BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR EVERYONE IN MISSISSIPPI?

Mississippi is at or near the bottom of all U.S. states and Washington DC on a variety of health care measures:

- Our state ranks 50<sup>th</sup> out of 51 on preventable deaths
- Our state ranks 49<sup>th</sup> out of 51 on infant mortality

A high proportion of the state's residents suffer from chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Our health care system is capable of producing miracles for individuals but it does poorly when we look at the population as a whole.

An unhealthy Mississippi affects us all:

- Children with poor health have lower educational attainment, which affects their ability to be contributing members of society.
- Poor health among workers reduces the state's economic vitality.
- The sicker people are, the more it costs to treat them, which drives up the costs of the whole system.

**The purpose of this discussion is to consider what changes to our health care system will improve the health of the people who make Mississippi their home.**

### GROUP INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Select a member of the group who will moderate your conversation and another who will keep track of the group's conclusions and report the results.
- 2) Before the discussion starts, take five minutes to read the attached description of the three choices. After considering ALL of the pros and cons, check the PROS that best describe how you want to improve health outcomes in Mississippi. (They can be from different choices.) Please try to check no more than 4 or 5.
- 3) As a group, take 35 minutes to talk about the elements and pros and cons of the different approaches. Identify the three points your group generally agrees should be part of the future you want for Mississippi health care. If there is something important you want to see that is not included here, please add it.
- 4) At the end of your 35 minutes, the reporter should be prepared to share your group's answers to these questions:
  - Which approach – or combination of approaches – do you prefer?
  - Are there any additions you would make?
  - Which pros and cons were most important in your thinking?



## Small Group Discussion #1

### Three approaches for better health outcomes in Mississippi

#### Choice #1: Expand Health Insurance Coverage

In this choice health insurance is expanded to cover to as many people as possible in Mississippi. People will be healthier because they can get treatment when they need it. People will be treated for illness or chronic disease earlier, and will require fewer emergency room visits and less expensive treatments.

- Most or all Mississippians will get health insurance, either through their employer, the state or through new types of individual plans that are easier to afford.
- The state will play a larger role in providing coverage for low-income residents (up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level).
- Insurance companies will no longer be able to deny anyone based on medical history or pre-existing conditions.
- The state will set up an insurance clearinghouse and group rate plans to make it easier for people without employer coverage or state assistance to get insurance.

#### Choice #2: Individuals Take More Responsibility for Their Health

In this choice, the key idea is to encourage healthier behaviors through incentives and education. Instead of thinking about health care only when they are sick, people will take responsibility for their own wellness and adopt healthier lifestyles that can dramatically improve health outcomes.

- People will have financial incentives to adopt behaviors that help get and keep them healthy. Insurance companies will offer lower rates for people who take part in preventive screenings, disease management and/or wellness programs.
- Employers will offer, and may require participation in, wellness programs (such as stress management, weight loss, smoking cessation) for their employees.
- Public health education will be expanded for adults and students to encourage better nutrition and physical exercise. Better resources for recreation and other wellness measures will be put in place.

#### Choice #3: Reorganize Health Care to a Wellness System

The third choice focuses on improving and reorganizing how people get health care in Mississippi. People will be healthier when they are part of a coordinated, well-managed system of care.

- Everyone in the state will have a “Medical Home” that consists of a primary health care provider who keeps track of the patient’s complete medical history.
- These primary providers offer preventive care, basic treatment for illness and injury, referrals to specialists – and connect patients to wellness programs and round the clock online and telephone services.
- An independent expert commission will define which treatments are most effective based on medical evidence, so all providers have the most up to date information.
- All residents will have a medical ID card with an electronic record of their medical history to enhance the effectiveness of care and reduce medical errors.

### #1: EXPAND HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

**PROS:**

- People without insurance hesitate to see the doctor; scared off by the cost, mild conditions end up being serious ones.
- This will reduce “last resort” emergency room visits and encourage timely use of preventative care.
- Requiring insurers to cover everyone regardless of pre-existing conditions removes unfair barriers to coverage.

**CONS:**

- Just because someone has insurance does not mean that they will visit the doctor or get preventive medicine.
- People need to do more themselves to improve their health. Only people can change their own habits.
- Many poor health outcomes are because of poorly managed care and missed opportunities on the part of the provider.

### #2: INDIVIDUALS TAKE MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEALTH

**PROS:**

- Most of the chronic diseases that people suffer from are rooted in behaviors that can be prevented.
- Giving people tangible incentives can produce real change that lowers costs, a win-win for insurers, employers and individuals.
- Making public health education a bigger priority will help make healthy living a part of the culture in Mississippi. We can change social expectations for people.

**CONS:**

- Many serious medical conditions are completely out of the individual’s control.
- It violates personal liberty to be forced to attend health classes or adopt specific behaviors like losing weight and quitting smoking.
- Many people in our state don’t have the education or resources to take charge of their health. Healthy food is expensive and healthy “lifestyles” are for the rich.

### #3: REORGANIZE TO A WELLNESS SYSTEM

**PROS:**

- This focuses providers on prevention first and treatment second, the right priority for wellness.
- A coordinated system of care and medical ID’s means that providers are working together and sharing information for the best benefit of the patient.
- Using evidence-based medicine takes advantage of the best thinking in the field, rather than each small practice trying to figure things out.

**CONS:**

- The “medical home” system would have limits on which specialists people could see. People should be able to choose all of their doctors.
- Medical ID cards could create an invasion of personal privacy.
- A person’s doctor should have the flexibility to choose whatever procedures they think are best, based on that individual’s situation.