

Covering Health Reform Between Now and 2014

An Alliance for Health Reform Toolkit

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www.allhealth.org

Now that health reform is law, reporters covering this subject have a new challenge: keeping readers, viewers and listeners engaged through the long implementation process. To help, the Alliance for Health Reform, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Association of Health Care Journalists held a briefing on June 10 at the National Press Club focusing on strategies for reporters covering health reform going forward.

The panel of seasoned health care reporters featured **Phil Galewitz** of Kaiser Health News, **Joanne Kenen** of the New America Foundation's New Health Dialogue Blog, **Noam Levey** of the Los Angeles Times and **Julie Rovner** of National Public Radio. The briefing clarified key points of confusion about the new health reform law, provided journalists with reporting resources, and offered suggestions for future story topics.

The panelists suggested many ways to keep stories fresh. Fresh stories not only take interesting angles on old topics affected by reform, they said, but also seek out less well-known reform provisions relevant to local communities. In keeping things fresh, journalists should keep track of implementation timelines so they can keep their stories up to date, panelists pointed out. (See the section on timelines below.) By reporting on measures already implemented or soon to be, journalists can focus on reforms most relevant to the current lives and businesses of their audiences.

Noam Levey stressed that there are many unanswered questions around the reform law. Instead of reporting hearsay, journalists should acknowledge the ambiguity of reform, he said, and convey to readers that much is unknown at this point about the law's future implications, even among those who drafted the law. The future of health reform will be known only after major regulatory decisions have been made, and experience gained with reform implementation.

Tips for Reporters

- Reach out beyond your usual contacts. Networking is a great way to bounce ideas off of other reporters and gather additional information on complex topics. Query members of organizations such as the [Association of Health Care Journalists](#); AHCJ members ask for and receive help daily through the group's active listserv. Use the Alliance for Health Reform's online [Find-an-Expert Service](#) to find people to interview beyond "the usual suspects."
- If you want information on specific provisions of the law and their implications, lobbyists, consultants and analysts are all good resources; just be aware of their biases.
- One good place to look for story ideas is the health reform law itself. Instead of taking the law as a whole, try picking it apart piece by piece, and focusing on stories that may be

generated out of smaller provisions. Some examples include the young adult provisions, the CLASS Act and the Small Business Tax Credit. Another place to look for stories is in summaries of the bill. Once a particular topic in a summary jumps out as a story idea, delve back into the law itself and seek out experts on that topic.

- Focus in on less well-known provisions of the health law -- topics that are relevant to the lives of consumers and business, but well known to very few locals. The tanning tax and the requirements for chain restaurants to post calorie counts are just two of many possibilities.
- When reviewing amendments that the health law makes to previous programs or legislation, have a copy of the original legislation being amended handy. Otherwise, the amendments won't make much sense.
- In the words of Phil Galewitz, "Follow the money." In this day and age anytime big money is involved, an interesting story will always follow.
 - Look into some of the programs receiving large grants or funds under the health law, such as the National Health Service Corps and nursing education loan programs.
 - Check the [Federal Business Opportunities website](#) for health reform-related grants and contracts being offered.
 - Examine how institutions and groups are strategizing to optimize revenues thanks to, or in spite of, reform changes.
 - How will general practitioners and hospitals adjust to health reform? Will teaching hospitals re-evaluate their mix of specialty vs. primary care practices? Will doctors follow through on threats that to stop accepting Medicare patients?
 - What will clinical laboratories do to adjust to the anticipated increase in demand for tests, given the new law's emphasis on preventative care and the millions of newly insured people who will need tests?
- Look for conflict. Where there is conflict around the health law, an interesting story will almost always emerge.
- Revitalize stories you've done before, with reform in mind. The main topics that health reporters cover have remained largely unchanged over the past few decades. Some stories that were compelling and relevant 20 years ago are still compelling and relevant in the age of reform. Re-examine topics such as Medicare Advantage, paying special attention to implications reform will have.
- States will play a huge role throughout the implementation of reform. Stories related to the states are a good way to get local readers involved. Use comparisons between your state and other states. What are the insurance regulations in your state? What are they in other states? Also focus in on state preparedness. How prepared is your state to implement reform? Is it planning to set up its own insurance exchanges, or is it even ready or willing to take advantage of the federal funding that reform makes available?
- For informative and captivating local stories, talk with local people and businesses directly affected by reform. Big employers in local communities are often the most outspoken about

health reform. Talk with small employers too. Do they plan to use the tax credits available to help them defray their health insurance costs? Reach out to local schools, governments, hospitals and service agencies.

RESOURCES

GENERAL

“What’s Next? Reporting on Health Reform Between Now and 2014,” June 10, 2010

Alliance for Health Reform, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Association of Health Care Journalists

www.allhealth.org/briefing_detail.asp?bi=187

This is the Alliance landing page for the June 10 briefing cosponsored by the three organizations above. You will find links here to the full webcast and podcast of the briefing, a briefing summary, among other downloadable resources. The Association of Health Care Journalists’ landing page for the briefing is at www.healthjournalism.org/calendar-details.php?id=505

Keeping Health Reform Coverage Fresh: Lessons from Top Journalists, June 10, 2010

Barbara Feder Ostrov, *ReportingOnHealth.org (Annenberg School for Communication, USC)*

<http://bit.ly/bPJ1db>

Barbara Feder Ostrov, a veteran health reporter herself, summarized the June 10 briefing in this blog post, offering the five main lessons she gained from the event.

Chapter One: Health Reform, from the Alliance sourcebook for reporters, Covering Health Issues, April 29, 2010

Joanne Kenen for the *Alliance for Health Reform*

<http://bit.ly/a7OTNe>

This first chapter of the Alliance’s sourcebook for reporters has been completely revised to reflect the provisions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (PPACA) and the companion Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010. Contains key facts about the reform law, background, tips for reporters, story ideas, experts with contact information, and helpful websites. All other chapters of the guide, “Covering Health Issues,” have been revised as well. For links to other chapters, go to the [table of contents](#).

H.R. 3590, The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act." 111th Cong. (enacted)

<http://democrats.senate.gov/reform/patient-protection-affordable-care-act-as-passed.pdf>

This is the main health reform law.

H.R. 4872, The Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act." 111th Cong. (enacted)

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:h4872enr.txt.pdf

This is the reconciliation act that amended sections of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

What's In There? An Ask-the-Experts Overview of the Health Reform Law, April 16, 2010

Alliance for Health Reform and The Commonwealth Fund

www.allhealth.org/briefing_detail.asp?bi=181

This is the landing page for a briefing at which attendees were encouraged to ask any question they liked about the health reform law and its implementation.

Navigating the Implementation Process: Reform Overview, April 12, 2010

Health Reform GPS

<http://bit.ly/dAVWff>

Health Reform GPS is a website established by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services offering information about health reform implementation. This document is a short overview of the reform law, with a separate section on immediate reforms.

What Will Happen Under Health Reform--And What's Next? A Resource for Journalists,

May/June 2010

The Commonwealth Fund, a supplement to the Columbia Journalism Review

<http://bit.ly/dCMbAs>

This resource from The Commonwealth Fund, published specifically for journalists, is a guide to covering health care reform implementation. The document outlines the provisions of the new health law, explains how health reform will increase coverage, and addresses health care costs. It also contains charts, tables, and a health reform timeline

Trudy Lieberman Campaign Desk Archive

Trudy Lieberman, *Columbia Journalism Review*

www.cjr.org/campaign_desk/trudy_lieberman_campaign_desk.php

Trudy Lieberman, a contributing editor for the Columbia Journalism Review, writes regularly on health reform, often pointing out angles that reporters might have missed. She also blogs for CJR.org.

Health care reform has passed: What's next?

Association of Health Care Journalists

www.healthjournalism.org/resources-tips-details.php?id=336

This extensive tip sheet from the AHCJ offers suggestions on covering reform, links to helpful resources, examples of recent coverage and expert sources.

Health Care Reporting Guide for Journalists, June 2009

Joanne Kenen, *New America Foundation*

<http://bit.ly/9RY8vK>

Joanne Kenen's short guide to health care journalism clarifies confusing terms for journalists new to the health care field and provides a list of helpful resources for journalists.

Covering Health Issues, 5th Edition—Appendix C: Covering Health Issues for News and Radio, April 20, 2010

Deborah Potter, *NewsLab*. Adapted by the *Alliance for Health Reform*.

<http://bit.ly/dm8fEk>

This appendix from the Alliance's sourcebook presents tips on making health policy stories visual for TV, and more engaging on the radio.

Medicine Means Sometimes Having To Say You Are Sorry, April 2, 2010

Joanne Kenen for *Miller-McCune*

<http://bit.ly/aih0IX>

This article explains how malpractice and medical errors may better be addressed through physicians taking responsibility for their errors and discussing outcome with their patients, rather than by denying errors and addressing problems in a court of law.

HEALTH REFORM IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINES

Health Reform Implementation Time Line, April 27, 2010

The Kaiser Family Foundation

<http://bit.ly/dum65T>

This in-depth timeline separates the provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act into subsections and tracks the implementation of health reform between 2010 and 2014. The subsections include: insurance reform, Medicare, Medicaid, prescription drugs, prevention/wellness, tax changes, workforce and quality improvement.

Implementation Timeline for Federal Health Reform Legislation, April 13, 2010

National Governors Association

<http://bit.ly/bRINtS>

This timeline covering 2010 through 2018 is designed to help states prepare for reform implementation.

Health Care Reform Law: Timeline for Small Businesses

National Federation of Independent Businesses, retrieved on May 26, 2010

<http://bit.ly/98V3XC>

This four-page document details the provisions of health reform that directly affect small businesses from now until 2018. The document outlines the changes in taxes, fees and mandates that will be implemented largely between 2010 and 2013, and the health care system changes that will begin in 2014.

HEALTH REFORM AND HIGH-RISK POOLS

Fact Sheet: Temporary High Risk Pool Program

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, retrieved on May 26, 2010

<http://bit.ly/a8diPU>

This short fact sheet provides basic background regarding who is eligible to receive insurance through temporary high risk pools and the range of premiums they could be expected to pay. The document also gives basic information on the states' roles in funding high-risk pools and provides a chart of the potential federal allocation for high-risk pools by state.

Covering High-Risk Insurance Pools

The Association of Health Care Journalists, retrieved on May 26, 2010

<http://bit.ly/dwSiVB>

This Association of Health Care Journalists landing page provides links for reporters covering high-risk insurance pools. Provides links to recent coverage of high risk pools, resources for obtaining information about high-risk pools, and suggestions from health journalists on covering high-risk pools.

Covering High-Risk Insurance Pools: Victoria Colliver

Victoria Colliver (*San Francisco Chronicle*) for the *Association of Health Care Journalists*, retrieved on May 26, 2010

<http://bit.ly/bwde4B>

A guide written by health care journalist Victoria Colliver on how to report on high-risk pools. Specifically, the article addresses the role of the states in funding high-risk pools and the key questions journalists should be asking. Note: Viewing this resource online requires ACHJ membership.

Covering High-Risk Insurance Pools: Sarah Varney

Sarah Varney (*KQED Public Radio and the California Report*) for the *Association of Health Care Journalists*, retrieved on May 26, 2010

<http://bit.ly/atR7uC>

Journalist and radio reporter Sarah Varney provides suggestions for high-risk pool news stories. She focuses on how high-risk pools will affect the individual. Note: Viewing this resource online requires ACHJ membership.

Covering High-Risk Insurance Pools: David Hage

David Hage (Minneapolis *Star Tribune*) for the *Association of Health Care Journalists*, retrieved on May 26, 2010

<http://bit.ly/9rcFLE>

David Hage, a reporter for the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, briefly explains problems and successes the Minnesota high-risk pool has encountered and uses Minnesota's pool as a resource to generate questions about the issues high-risk pools may create nationwide. Note: Viewing this resource online requires ACHJ membership

Health Coverage for the High-Risk Uninsured: Policy Options for Design of the Temporary High Risk Pool, May 2010

Mark Merlis for the *National Institute of Health Care Reform*

<http://bit.ly/aKRz3j>

A 14-page analysis addressing key issues of high-risk pools including: eligibility, benefits, premiums, funding, and integration of new temporary high-risk pools with current state pools and insurance markets.

HEALTH REFORM AND MEDICAID

What's In There? The New Health Reform Law and Medicaid, April 23, 2010

Alliance for Health Reform and Kaiser Family Foundation

<http://bit.ly/bAsRmQ>

Half of the 32 million uninsured people expected to gain coverage through health reform will be covered by Medicaid. This is the landing page for a briefing on how the provisions of the new health reform law will affect Medicaid. Includes links to the briefing webcast, podcast and downloadable resource materials.

Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program Provisions in the New Health Reform Law, April 7, 2010

Kaiser Family Foundation

<http://bit.ly/bSiTZO>

After providing a brief overview of changes to the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid financing under health reform, the document provides a 10-page chart that summarizes specific provisions of each programs. Furthermore, the chart compares provisions of Medicare and CHIP before and after implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Medicaid Coverage and Spending in Health Reform: National and State-by-State Results for Adults at or Below 133% FPL, May 2010

John Holahan and Irene Headen, *Urban Institute*, for the *Kaiser Family Foundation*

<http://bit.ly/c632QB>

This 50-page study produced by the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured estimates the national and state-by-state budget costs for implementing expansions of the Medicaid program. The study found that because the federal government will pay for the majority of costs incurred by the new Medicaid program in states, "increases in state spending are small...compared to what states would have spent if reform had not been enacted."

Early Medicaid Expansion Under Health Care Reform, May 2010

Families USA

<http://bit.ly/aRpakM>

A fact sheet produced by Families USA that explains early Medicaid expansion option for the state expansion of Medicaid programs before January 1, 2014. The fact sheet outlines eligibility for adults to get Medicaid benefits under expansion, the benefits that states are required to provide under expansion, and the federal matching rates that states may expect to receive under early expansion.

HEALTH REFORM AND MEDICARE

What's In There? The New Health Reform Law and Medicare, May 7, 2010

Alliance for Health Reform and Kaiser Family Foundation

www.allhealth.org/briefing_detail.asp?bi=184

As the health reform legislation was developed, proposed changes to Medicare were among the most hotly debated issues. This is the landing page to a briefing illuminating what is really in the law concerning Medicare and what the law's Medicare provisions will mean for administrators,

beneficiaries and the health care sector in the U.S. Includes links to the briefing webcast, podcast and downloadable resource materials.

Health Reform's Changes in Medicare, May 20, 2010

Amanda Cassidy for the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Health Affairs*

<http://bit.ly/9iOniu>

This health policy brief explains the changes to Medicare under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Among these changes: the expansion of prescription drug coverage, primary care improvements, and reduction in payments for Medicare providers.

Summary of Key Changes to Medicare in 2010 Health Reform Law

The Kaiser Family Foundation, retrieved on May 27, 2010

<http://bit.ly/9nsIMq>

This summary provides a comprehensive overview of changes to Medicare under the health care reform legislation. It also includes an implementation time line for Medicare through 2015.

Major Medicare Savings under Health Reform Legislation, April 7, 2010

American Medical Association

<http://bit.ly/aWUXbu>

This short document describes the federal budget savings specific to Medicare for types of providers and specific government programs.

HEALTH REFORM AND PRIVATE COVERAGE

What's In There? The New Health Reform Law and Private Insurance, April 30, 2010

Alliance for Health Reform and Kaiser Family Foundation

www.allhealth.org/briefing_detail.asp?bi=183

The health reform law's provisions governing private health insurance mark a dramatic change from past practice, and much attention has been paid by opposing sides to the potential implementation and legal issues. This is the landing page for a briefing dealing with how the new health reform law affects access to private coverage. A range of specific provisions were covered, including the new federal high-risk pools, tax credits for small businesses, health insurance exchanges, the individual mandate, and employer obligations. Includes links to the briefing webcast, podcast and downloadable resource materials.

Near-Term Changes in Health Insurance, May 4, 2010

Health Affairs and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

<http://bit.ly/boTGEv>

This health policy brief focuses on reforms to the private insurance market in 2010 and 2011, providing an implementation timeline.

Summary of Coverage Provisions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, April 28, 2010

The Kaiser Family Foundation

<http://bit.ly/cjVSe6>

This three-page document summarizes key changes to the private insurance market, including the individual mandate, new insurance market regulations, and employer requirements.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2009: Health Insurance Market Reforms, April 20, 2010

National Association of Insurance Commissioners

<http://bit.ly/dx1WF3>

In this chart outlining reforms to the health insurance market, changes are broken down by different sections of the legislation. This is a good example of how to find story ideas by digging into the finer points of the reform law.

Health Premiums Likely To Rise More, April 3, 2010

Noam M. Levey, *Los Angeles Times*

<http://bit.ly/dahp7q>

This article provides both a compelling example of health reporting and an informative analysis of gaps in the health reform law, which may allow insurance companies to greatly increase premiums between now and 2014.

Changes Coming To Insurance Plans, April 6, 2010

Julie Appleby, *Kaiser Health News*

<http://bit.ly/dpydRE>

This articles provides a good overview of the private insurance provisions in the reform law. Illustrates how to make a complex topic approachable for the reader.

Health Law's "Grandfather" Clause Could Deprive Consumers of Key Benefits, May 10, 2010

Phil Galewitz and Mary Agnes Carey, *Kaiser Health News*

<http://bit.ly/coYpQE>

This article notes that existing health plans are exempt from several of the consumer protections contained in the new reform law, with potential consequences.

Some Recent Grads Face Health Care Coverage Gap, May 27, 2010

Julie Rovner, *NPR*

<http://n.pr/bGrsQc>

This article by Julie Rovner clarifies confusion surrounding provisions in the new health reform legislation to extend coverage to young adults as dependents on their parents' plans.

Fact Sheet: Keeping the Health Plan You Have: The Affordable Care Act and "Grandfathered" Health Plans, June 14, 2010

The Department of Health and Human Services

<http://bit.ly/c0wAMS>

This fact sheet outlines the basics of grandfathered plans, including which plans are eligible as grandfather plans, what changes may cause a plan to lose its grandfathered status and the projected impacts of grandfathered on consumers and employers.

HEALTH REFORM AND SMALL BUSINESSES

Summary of Small Business Health Insurance Tax Credit Under PPACA (P.L. 111-148), April 5, 2010

Congressional Research Service

<http://bit.ly/bRUK8b>

This five-page summary details the small business tax credit. The summary briefly outlines eligibility requirements for small employers, and provides information about the phase-out of the credit.

Will the Small Business Tax Credit help small business owners provide insurance?

National Federation of Independent Business, retrieved on May 27, 2010.

<http://bit.ly/bhKNOJ>

A one-page analysis is skeptical that the small business tax credit will do much to provide relief for small business owners responsible for covering their employees.

Lower Premiums, Stronger Businesses: How health insurance reform will bring down the costs for small businesses

Department of Health and Human Services, retrieved on May 28, 2010.

<http://bit.ly/chSMS6>

This seven-page document produced by the Department of Health and Human Services explains how health insurance reform could reduce the health coverage costs of small businesses.

HEALTH REFORM AND THE STATES

Health Insurance Reform and Your State: The Case for Change

United States Department of Health and Human Services, retrieved on May 26, 2010.

<http://bit.ly/4Q9due>

This interactive website features a map of the United States that allows users to click on any state and see the health reform changes that have been implemented to date in that state, and are coming up.

State Decision-Making in Implementing National Health Reform

National Governor's Association, retrieved on May 26, 2010.

<http://bit.ly/9CSBES>

This comprehensive discussion draft written before reform outlines the major challenges states will face as a result of the passage of health care reform. The draft is intended to help states better formulate solutions for the difficult decisions they may face.

The Mississippi Delta's Healthcare Blues, June 3, 2010

Noam M. Levey, *Los Angeles Times*

<http://bit.ly/dgcrzE>

This piece uses a human interest story in order to investigate the health care received by the uninsured and roadblocks to obtaining Medicaid. The article explains the current situation in Mississippi, improvements expected after reform is implemented, and problems that may still exist post-reform.

Facing Obamacare: What States Should Know Now, May 3, 2010

Dennis Smith, *Heritage Foundation*

<http://bit.ly/9f4GBK>

This article explains the effects that large-scale federal health care reform may have on restricting the traditional role and authority of states. The author says the new law will weaken states and hurt state economies.

State Actions to Implement Federal Health Reform, May 20, 2010

National Conference of State Legislatures

<http://bit.ly/dmJtJc>

This document consists of a state-by-state table outlining health reform implementation efforts via legislation and via governors' executive orders. Among state efforts are the creation of task forces, the appointment of officials for health reform implementations, and proposals of legislation to alter or oppose federal actions.

New Rules For States in Health Reform Implementation

Alan Weil and Raymond Scheppach

<http://bit.ly/bbVcrw>

This 5 page article stresses the importance for states to have a thorough knowledge of reform and detailed vision for implementation in order to ensure not only that residents obtain affordable coverage and the best access to healthcare coverage, but also that the state takes full advantage of multiple opportunities to obtain federal funding.

EXPERTS AND WEBSITES

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Websites

AFL- CIO www.afl-cio.org

Alliance for Health Reform www.allhealth.org

Alliance of Community Health Plans www.achp.org

America's Health Insurance Plans www.ahip.org

Association of Health Care Journalists www.healthjournalism.org

Blue Cross Blue Shield Association www.bcbs.com

California HealthCare Foundation www.chcf.org

Catholic Health Association www.chausa.org

Center for Health Care and Policy Research, Penn State University www.hhdev.psu.edu/chcpr/

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