

Portland, Oregon

In December 2001, the Boards of Commissioners of Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties (Oregon) appointed a Blue Ribbon Panel to develop a policy level recommendation to improve healthcare for the low income and uninsured through structured leadership and responsibility. The 38-member panel, made up of business people, advocates, consumers, health system representatives, health care providers and elected officials, met five times over a six-month period to consider the issue in an open forum. The forum's topics included: 1) The current state of healthcare access for the low income and vulnerable, 2) Financing care, 3) Potential structures for assuring access regionally, 4) The necessary work to be completed for improved access and 5) Final discussion and recommendations.

The culmination of the panel's meetings was a recommendation that the issue be approached from a regional perspective and through a structure called a Health Care Safety Net Authority. This authority, led by government through an intergovernmental agreement, will allow for all concerned parties to impact the direction, finance and activities of the assurance process. Our gift is the formal report of this process.