Coverage Matters: 
Measuring the Consequences of Uninsurance

Findings & Recommendations of the Institute of Medicine Committee on the Consequences of Uninsurance
Obstacles to Reform

1. “The uninsured get the care they need.”
2. “I’m not personally affected, so it’s not my problem.”
3. “We can’t afford to cover the uninsured”
Coverage Matters

• Most of the uninsured (80 percent) are members of working families.
• Two-thirds earn less than 200 percent of the poverty standard.
• Being uninsured is rarely a choice. For most, health insurance is either unavailable or unaffordable.
Care Without Coverage - Too Little, Too Late

• On average, uninsured adults receive about half the medical care of insured adults.

• The uninsured receive fewer preventive services, less care for chronic illness, and poorer hospital-based care.

• As a result, they tend to be sicker and to die sooner than adults with health insurance.
Health Insurance is a Family Matter

• 1 in 5 families (60 million Americans) are either uninsured, or live with someone who is uninsured.
• Uninsured children face the same barriers to care as uninsured adults.
• When even one member is uninsured, the entire family is vulnerable to the financial consequences of a serious illness or injury.
A Shared Destiny...

“On Call” crisis

↑ Operational costs

↓ Reimbursement

Growth in uninsured

Loss of access to care

Medical liability crisis

Inpatient bed shortages

Ambulance diversion

ER crowding

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT
Crisis in the ER

Turnaways and huge delays are a surefire recipe for disaster. What you can do
Community Consequences of Uninsurance

- Funding shortfalls for traditional public health activities
- Diminished control of communicable diseases (e.g., syphilis, HIV, tuberculosis)
- Weakened emergency preparedness
18,000 die prematurely.

Uninsured children and adults receive fewer and less timely services.

8 million uninsured with chronic illnesses receive fewer services and have increased morbidity and worse outcomes.

41 million uninsured are less likely to receive preventive and screening services.

60 million uninsured individuals and their family members have less financial security and increased life stress due to lack of insurance.

People living in communities with a higher than average uninsured rate are at risk for reduced availability of health care services and overtaxed public health resources.

All Americans

The value of health capital forgone each year due to uninsurance is estimated between $65 and $130 billion.
**IOM Committee Findings**

1. The uninsured *don’t* get the care they need.
2. Uninsurance is destabilizing our health care system, jeopardizing access to care for everyone.
3. We can’t afford NOT to cover the uninsured.
“...the status quo is everyone’s second choice.”
The *status quo* should be everyone’s *last* choice.
“The Committee recommends that the President and Congress develop a strategy to achieve universal insurance coverage and establish a firm and explicit schedule to reach this goal by 2010.”

- Insuring Health, Jan. 2004
It is time for our nation
to cover everyone.
www.iom.edu/uninsured