

# Pointing the Way: A Series of Policy Papers to Transform the Health Safety Net

## Part 3: A Call To Action

2009

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In 2009, a **Regional Health Care Safety Net Summit** was convened to review and endorse a series of policy recommendations for strengthening the health care safety net in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties.

HMPRG, in collaboration with 8 other organizations, began the Regional Health Care Safety Net Initiative in 2006 to build on the successes of the previous Chicago/Cook County Summit and to address the new and intensified problems of today. This collaborative effort, which uses the World Health Organization's framework for strengthening a health system, is designed to create a regional blueprint to more efficiently and effectively provide quality health services for uninsured, Medicaid, and other vulnerable populations across the seven county region. The economic downturn, political leadership changes, and shifting populations provide an opportunity to create sustainable change.

### Background

In 1990, the Mayor of Chicago, Cook County Board President, and Governor of Illinois convened leaders from the public, private, and not-for-profit health care system, along with business, philanthropic, and community leaders in a Chicago/Cook County Health Summit. This year-long effort prepared a prospective roadmap to address the problems facing vulnerable populations and providers of the health care safety net in Cook County, with many of the recommendations since implemented.

The ensuing years have seen the emergence of new problems and intensification of old ones. Skyrocketing unemployment, hospital closures, increased number of uninsured, funding cuts across the health system, shifting demographics, clinic consolidations, uncoordinated planning, and new political leadership require we take action, but this time from the regional perspective of northeastern Illinois. With a national call from the President to reform the health system, and stimulus package money to support safety net institutions, this is our opportunity to answer the call and ensure the strength and continuity of our region's health care safety net.

Our steady progress to date has resulted in a detailed description about each county's needs and resources (through key informant meetings and assembling of existing data), background information about models in other metropolitan areas, and prioritization and support for this direction at a Pre-Summit meeting last fall. To access this material, please visit [www.hmprg.org](http://www.hmprg.org) and view the "Regional Healthcare Safety Net" under "Programs and Projects."

### Action

A series of policy recommendations that emerged from the work of over 100 partners and organizations over the past two years was presented at a day-long Summit on **June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Student Center West, Chicago Rooms AB.**

At that time stakeholders reviewed, prioritized and endorsed the recommendations, and as a unified community, planned for moving the recommendations to action. The recommendations were to be a catalyst in aligning disparate health planning efforts such as public health department plans (e.g.: IPLANS), the State Health Improvement Plan, etc. These recommendations will be used to influence related planning efforts such as the region's new comprehensive plan, "Go To 2040," being developed by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). These recommendations will enable the regional health safety net to be strengthened and sustained in new and profound ways.