

Location: Statewide – Sacramento, San Francisco, Fresno, Riverside, Los Angeles, San Diego.

Issue: Viewpoint Learning's "Health Coverage for all Californians"

Methodology: Viewpoint Learning – Strategic Dialogues (business/civic leaders) and Choice Dialogues (public)

Link to more: <http://www.viewpointlearning.com/publications/reports.shtml>

In 2005, there were 6.6 million Californians uninsured, while health care costs rose by over 10%. This made it more difficult for employers and individuals to afford the cost of health care coverage. In order for there to be sustainable health care reform in California, both the private sector (businesses) and the public sector will need to collaborate to create better policy. Viewpoint Learning, an organization that engages different perspectives of a representative sample of citizens and other stakeholders regarding crucial issues in dialogue, joined together with the California Endowment, to work on a research project aimed at uniting business and civic leaders, as well as the general public, in creating alternate solutions for health care reform.

The first step taken was conducting two Strategic Dialogue sessions with selected business, civic and non-profit organization leaders, health care professionals, and insurance executives in both Northern and Southern California, which focusing on solutions to California's health care crisis. The second step consisted of six day-long Choice Dialogues with a randomly selected sample of approximately 30-40 Californians composing a diversity in ethnicities, socio-economic situations and political views, which focused on the issues of what type of health care system the citizens wanted to see implemented. During the Strategic Dialogues the primary interest of the businesses and civic leaders to establish a method to achieve universal health coverage for all Californians.

The first option discussed was individual mandate, which required individuals to buy insurance and providing assistance for those who can't afford premiums; the second was a government-sponsored plan for preventive and catastrophic care; and the third was government-sponsored comprehensive. The citizens' Choice Dialogues resulted in a strong majority supporting comprehensive coverage. Even though it was not a perfect solution, it was the highest ranked and citizens were willing to make the necessary trade offs. The citizens designed four scenarios of their own for solving California's health care crisis: use the employer-based system to cover all Californians; require all Californians to have health insurance; have the state provide the basics, the rest is up to you; and comprehensive public insurance coverage for all Californians.

The question of who is a Californian was raised considering California has many undocumented illegal immigrants. Most participants in the citizens' Choice Dialogue

reasoned that the health coverage system should include undocumented immigrants, but only those who contribute to California (i.e. pay taxes and contribute to the state's economy). 77% of the participants agreed that health insurance coverage for children was "absolutely essential;" whereas, 20% of the participants believed it was "very important." As for preventive care, 53% of the participants found it "essential" and 31% of the participants found it "very important." All the participants in the Choice Dialogue agreed that the costs of their efficient health coverage system should be distributed across all sectors (employers, government, and individuals).