

## Grant Outcomes Report

### Informing Health Care Reform Policy Options for New York State

#### The Problem:

Approximately 2.5 million New Yorkers lacked health insurance in 2007, according to estimates from the United Hospital Fund, a New York City-based health policy center.<sup>1</sup> Incremental reforms had been established and momentum was building for more comprehensive reform. Surveys had been conducted of residents and employers regarding their preferences, but there had not been a coordinated strategy that blended quantitative and qualitative methods to seek public input.

#### Grant Activities & Outcomes:

With a grant from the New York State Health Foundation's Coverage Consortium initiative, researchers at Cornell University aimed to generate information about health care reform options in New York by systematically gathering and analyzing the perspectives of employers and residents.

Kosali Simon, Ph.D., and William D. White, Ph.D., co-directed the project. They surveyed 1,200 residents and 475 employers by telephone and conducted eight focus groups of residents and small business owners regarding their opinions about health insurance reform in the State.

Simon and White reported the following findings of the study in a report entitled "Informing Health Care Reform Options for New York State".

#### AMONG RESIDENTS:

- ▶ Nearly 93% thought it was extremely or very important that leaders reduce costs, and 89% said it was extremely or very important that leaders reduce the number of uninsured.
- ▶ More than 82% favored some form of expanded coverage for families living above 100% of the Federal poverty level.

<sup>1</sup> "Health Insurance in New York, 2006-2007." New York, NY: United Hospital Fund, June 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.uhfny.org/assets/649>, September 1, 2010.

#### KEY INFORMATION:

##### GRANTEE

Cornell University, Department of Policy Analysis and Management

##### GRANT TITLE

Informing Health Care Reform Policy Options for New York State

##### DATES

September 1, 2007-December 10, 2008

##### GRANT AMOUNT

\$252,753

##### GRANT ID

2055189

##### FUNDING

NYSHealth Coverage Consortium Initiative

- ▶ Support for employer mandates was weak: almost 60% of the general sample opposed them, while 53% of cell phone-only residents supported mandates.
- ▶ Most (72%) supported a single-payer model to cover the uninsured; however, focus group participants expressed concerns about the government's ability to create a system.
- ▶ More than 80% said they would pay something for reforms that reduced the uninsured and more than 60% said they would pay at least \$50 per year.

#### **AMONG EMPLOYERS:**

- ▶ High cost is the major reason employers do not offer insurance.
- ▶ Some 72% of small employers, 79% of medium employers, and 88% of large employers said they bear some responsibility for providing coverage to their workers.
- ▶ Some 57% of small and large employers and 46% of medium employers said that companies with 10 or more employees that did not offer insurance should be taxed 8% of payroll to pay for state-sponsored coverage.
- ▶ Almost half of small firms, 61% of medium firms, and 56% of large firms said they would offer coverage if employees with incomes of less than 400% of the Federal poverty level could be enrolled in publicly subsidized programs.

#### **SIMON AND WHITE DREW SEVERAL IMPLICATIONS FROM THESE FINDINGS:**

- ▶ Health insurance reform is important and residents are open to a range of approaches. A large majority are willing to pay more taxes to cover the uninsured.
- ▶ The level of willingness to pay is less than the level required to meet the desire for more coverage.
- ▶ Although most employers agree that responsibility for health insurance rests with both employers and employees, the degree of agreement varies with firm size and industry.
- ▶ Assisting residents in gaining a better understanding of proposals will be important to winning their acceptance.
- ▶ Employers indicate they would likely continue to offer private coverage even if public coverage expands. These employers might change how they structure compensation in that case, however.

#### **Publications:**

Simon K and White WD. *Informing Health Care Reform Options for New York State*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University College of Human Ecology Policy Analysis and Management, October 2008. Available at:

<http://www.nyshealthfoundation.org/content/document/detail/1293/>