



JEWISH COMMUNITY ACTION

Organizing for justice

REDESIGNING GENERAL ASSISTANCE MEDICAL CARE

Jewish Values

In the 12th century Moses Maimonides, the great Jewish philosopher and physician, listed health care as the most important communal service that a city had to offer to its residents (*Mishnah Torah, Sefer Hamadda IV:23*).

In the *Shulchan Aruch*, a codification of Jewish law, doctors are required to reduce their rates for poor patients, and, where that is not sufficient, communal subsidies are to be used. (*Yoreh Deah 249:16; and in the Responsa Ramat Rahel of Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg sections 24-25*).

Members of the Jewish community feel obligated to ensure that accessible, quality, affordable medical care is available to all. Many feel it is *mipneh tikkun ha-olam*—what we are obligated to do in order to repair the world.

General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC)

General Assistance Medical Care provides health care coverage to very low-income Minnesotans who don't qualify for other state and federal programs. In 2008, more than 77,000 Minnesotans were enrolled in the program at some point – with an average of 35,000 enrolled at any given time.

Governor Pawlenty line-item vetoed and “unallotted” the GAMC program in 2009. Thirty-five thousand Minnesotans will lose their health care coverage early in 2010 as a result of the elimination of GAMC. GAMC enrollees:

- Earn an income at or below 75% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (\$8,100 a year)
- Are single adults under the age of 65 with no dependents
- 70% of enrollees have a mental health and/or chemical health diagnosis

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In addition to the harm to those who will lose their health care coverage, the elimination of GAMC will affect us all.

- Hospitals statewide will face an estimated loss of \$200 - \$400 million dollars.
- Potentially more than two thousand jobs will be cut from hospitals, community health clinics and mental health treatment facilities if GAMC is not reinstated.
- This could lead to lower quality care – including longer ER waits, fewer specialty units, and higher patient loads.
- Hospitals will have to increase the costs of care for everyone to make up for lost reimbursement from the state.
- Hospitals that now serve as the training grounds for our states' medical professionals will be forced to consider cuts to their training programs.
- Increased property tax to make up for the loss in state funding for General Assistance Medical Care population.
- Local government will have to shoulder increased costs due to higher demand on public safety and other support services.



What is the plan?

- Jewish Community Action and our members are part of a vibrant, coordinated, strategic organizing effort to convince the state legislature to reinstate General Assistance Medical Care. We are part of a coalition of more than 30 organizations, including the Office of Social Justice, St. Stephen Human Rights Coalition, Minnesota Nurses Association and Take Action Minnesota.

What can you do?

- Contact Jewish Community Action for specifics and details.
- Talk to state law makers and share your concerns about cutting General Assistance Medical Care.
- Talking to neighbors and friends about this pending situation.
- Attend an action and or an educational event – these public events will help show our lawmakers that Minnesotans care about reinstating GAMC.
- Coordinate with JCA to bring an educational program to your synagogue or community.
- Join an action alert team to receive emails or phone calls when specific actions are needed.

Contact Jewish Community Action:

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