Safety Net and Public Health Trends

Initial Findings from HSC’s 2007 Site Visits

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Public-Sector Findings and Issues

- On the policy front
- Safety net provider issues
- Public health matters
- Persisting problems/looming concerns
Policy: Relief, Restoration, Reform

- State budget upturn permits recovery of lost ground

- Medicaid modifications
  - Citizenship requirements, pursuit of new and renegotiated waivers
  - Intensifying federal scrutiny, including IGT/CPE oversight

- SCHIP—presumption of renewal—growing angst

- Commissions, commissions...—coverage and capacity

- Health reform—Massachusetts—one and done?
Safety Net Provider Issues

- Intact but endangered but intact but endangered but intact — the saga continues with rising demands and expectations

- Solidifying their lock on the uninsured market; achieving “magnet status” for low-income persons with specialty needs

- Safety net hospitals—resisting mission-shifting/hedging temptations; attention to community benefit/charity care standards for other hospitals having some effects

- Some CHCs outshining private-sector competitors as patient-centered medical homes

- Appropriately anxious about health reform implications
Public Health Matters

- Preparedness advances at uneven pace: more ready in general but more uncertain about what to prepare for; shifting priorities at federal and state levels perplex local authorities
  - Some major successes in anti-smoking campaigns and cigarette tax increases (OH, AZ, IN)
  - Potential to unleash more grassroots activism in other areas of public concern
- Obesity is a prominent focus in several markets
- Continuing struggles with workforce issues
Persisting Problems/Looming Concerns

- Continued deterioration of public mental health services with substantial spillover effects on safety net
  - Immigration—health care system as crucible
  - Quality/disparities issues attracting more concern
  - Inflection point in economic recovery has passed
  - Latest era of state-based reform initiatives in jeopardy
Implications

- Rising uninsured, increased demand has intensified stress on safety net
- Access to specialty care for uninsured, low-income a severe problem without an apparent solution on the horizon
- Strain on safety net likely to increase as costs continue to rise, number of uninsured grows—economic downturn would only increase pressures
- Public health preparedness still evolving