**Policy Advocacy Challenges**

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Description

Safety net hospitals are medical hospitals that are legally mandated to provide "significant care" for persons regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. Such facilities have been present in the United States since the 19th century, usually in the form of private philanthropic and/or religious endeavors. Throughout the 20th century, however, these institutions began transitioning to for-profit organizations accepting patients from all socioeconomic statuses. By the 1980s and 1990s, safety net hospitals and disproportionate share hospital programs began filling this vacuum.  Despite the existence of safety net hospitals and disproportionate share hospital programs, many in the United States continue to face financial catastrophe and bankruptcy when experiencing life-threatening conditions and circumstances. Furthermore, safety net hospitals often live in a perpetual state of financial threat of closure. Finally, patient feedback and patient outcomes regarding safety net hospitals are often poor.  Prompts for Reflection and Response: What sort of national health policy (or policies) protect persons from bankruptcy and financial ruin when facing medical catastrophe? What types of changes would you suggest be made to current health care-related policy in the United States? Where would you start and what changes to the current policies on health care would you target first?   In your opinion (based on social work knowledge and/or experience) what are the three most important areas of concern when advocating for changes in health care policies? Briefly explain why for each.  Additional Resources for Consideration and Deliberation:  The Financial Impact of the American Health Care Act's Medicaid Provisions on Safety Net Hospitals The negative policy ramifications of the American Health Care Act's reduction in Medicaid reimbursements are discussed in terms of impact on safety net hospitals. Report by the Commonwealth Fund, whose mission is "to promote a high-performing health care system that achieves better access, improved quality, and greater efficiency, particularly for society's most vulnerable, including low-income people, the uninsured, and people of color."  Failure to Rescue in Safety-Net Hospitals: Availability of Hospital Resources and Differences in Performance