

Healthcare Coverage Does Not Equal Access

What is OAFP?

Ohio Academy of Family Physicians (OAFP) is the professional organization serving Ohio's family physicians. With more than 4,400 family physician, family medicine resident and medical student members, OAFP is one of the largest and most active chapters of American Academy of Family Physicians.

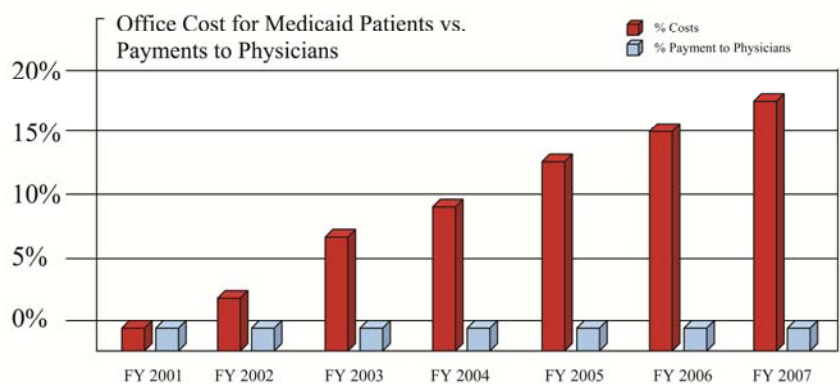
OAFP provides the following member services:

- Legislative advocacy
- Continuing medical education (CME)
- Nationally recognized printed and electronic publications
- Award-winning public relations initiatives
- Leadership development
- Professional networking opportunities

Family physicians enthusiastically support the state's efforts to increase access to affordable healthcare. Reaching out to the 250,000 low-income Ohioans who are currently eligible for, but not enrolled in, Medicaid or SCHIP is a laudable first step in ensuring that Ohio's most vulnerable children and families get the care they need and deserve.

But to ensure true access to quality care, physicians must be available in the community to see those needing care. Each year it becomes more and more difficult for physicians to serve Ohioans covered by the Medicaid program.

- Reimbursement rates are flat or declining while expenses continue to increase. Medicaid payments for physicians have only been raised 3 percent in 2008.
- Due to government and managed care payment caps, physicians cannot raise their fees to recoup the inflationary cost of doing business.



Source: Ohio State Medical Association

Primary care physician practices are small businesses facing the same rising costs as other small businesses – utilities, employee wages and benefits, equipment, supplies, etc. Primary care physician offices also face increasing overhead costs that are unique – soaring professional liability insurance premiums and the cost of additional manpower necessary to handle ever increasing paperwork and administrative burdens.

Inadequate reimbursement rates – rates that do not reflect the increasing costs associated with delivering healthcare services – are negatively impacting access to healthcare in Ohio.

According to a 2002 Ohio Coalition of Primary Care Physicians survey:

- Inadequate Medicaid physician reimbursement negatively impacts Medicaid patients' ability to access healthcare.
- Medicaid reimbursement did not even cover fixed overhead costs for 79 percent of responding physicians.

For physicians who no longer participate in Medicaid, the most important reason, accounting for nearly 92 percent of responses, is inadequate reimbursement.

Since this survey was completed, the situation has only grown more dire. To ensure that coverage equals access, reimbursement to primary care physicians must be increased to levels that make it financially feasible for physicians to provide care to Medicaid patients.

