



The Affordable Care Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama on March 23, 2010; the comprehensive health care reform has a number of changes that will affect you, your family, and your friends.

## *Understanding Health Reform* **Integrated Care and Why You Should Care**

The Affordable Care Act includes a number of provisions that provide supports and incentives for States and health care providers to adopt the practice of the integration of primary care and behavioral health care services. For consumers of mental health services or those in recovery from addiction disorders, the law's provisions and the general movement toward integration are important steps that can lead to improved overall health.

### **Why is the integration of primary care and behavioral health care important?**

Studies conducted in the last decade show that people with mental health and/or addiction disorders die at a younger age than those in the general population. Causes of these premature deaths are likely to include treatable health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. People diagnosed with schizophrenia die from these conditions at two to three times the rate of the general population. People living with addictions also have higher rates of many chronic, life-threatening conditions.

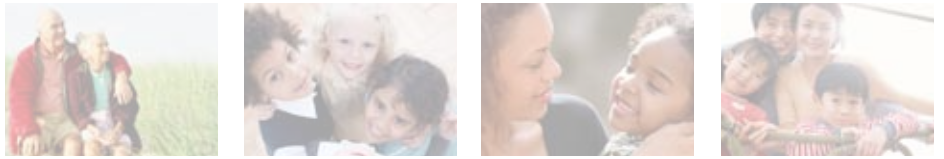
A major reason for these high rates of illness and death among people with addiction or mental health conditions has been their lack of contact with primary care services.

### **What is integrated care?**

Integrated care is when health care professionals consider all health conditions at the same time. If, for example, a person is taking two or more medications at the same time, including a medication for a mental health disorder, doctors can monitor the interaction of the drugs. Integrated treatment is more likely to be tailored to the individual, as it allows for health care professionals to understand more about the whole person.

### **How does integrated care work?**

Integration can take place in any of several ways. In some cases, mental health or addiction treatment services may simply be provided in the same building as primary health care services. In others, a team of professionals, including both primary care and behavioral health care



## Where can I find more information on Health Reform?

The Affordable Care Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama on March 23, 2010; the comprehensive health care reform has a number of changes that will affect you, your family, and your friends. There are a number of resources available to help you find information about the Affordable Care Act. Some resources available are:

- <http://www.healthcare.gov>
- <http://www.samhsa.gov/healthreform>
- <http://blog.samhsa.gov>
- <http://www.hhs.gov>
- <http://www.ncsl.org>

The most comprehensive resource available is the Federal Government's new Web site <http://www.healthcare.gov>. Healthcare.gov provides you with a number of resources. On healthcare.gov you can:

- Find and compare health care coverage options in your State, including Medicaid services.
- Access information and timelines about the different provisions in the Affordable Care Act.
- Compare care quality of hospitals.
- Learn about health prevention and get prevention tips.

If you want to know more about your rights under the Affordable Care Act, go to: [http://www.healthcare.gov/law/provisions/billofright/patient\\_bill\\_of\\_rights.html](http://www.healthcare.gov/law/provisions/billofright/patient_bill_of_rights.html).

specialists, may work together with the same patients, or a primary care nurse or physician with mental health or addiction medicine training may provide all basic services for each patient.

## What is an example of integrated care?

The most common example of integrated care is the “patient-centered medical home,” also known as “health home” or “clinical home.” In this home, a provider or a team of health care professionals is accountable for a person’s care and manages and coordinates all of the services a person receives. This individualized model is a way for each patient to receive coordinated services and for health professionals to work together more efficiently for the benefit of each person.

## What will integrated care mean for the behavioral health community?

Integration of primary care and behavioral health care will allow health professionals to coordinate diagnoses and treatments so that they can complement each other. Integrated care should result in fewer medical tests and eliminate repetition of even such simple procedures as blood draws. It is especially important for doctors treating you to be aware of the medications you are taking. Integrated health care delivery will ensure that your medications will not interfere with one another or, more important, will not be prescribed in a way that could harm you.

An important result of integrated health care delivery for everyone will be the ability for all health care information to be accessible from one place. For doctors and other health care professionals, this will make it much easier to monitor all health conditions a person may have and to coordinate treatments so they don’t interfere with each other. Integrated health care should also result in fewer forms for patients to fill out, leaving less room for error and confusion.

For more information on integrated care, go to <http://www.samhsa.gov/healthreform/healthhomes> or go to <http://www.healthcare.gov> and search “health homes.”