

Recommended Actions

Women In Government and the Elimination of Cervical Cancer

As a national, bipartisan organization of women state legislators, Women In Government has taken a leadership position in the fight against cervical cancer with the Challenge to Eliminate Cervical Cancer Campaign. This initiative urges state legislators to address cervical cancer prevention by increasing access to the most advanced and appropriate screening and preventive technologies, particularly for underserved women, and improving education about HPV and cervical cancer.

Women In Government develops and updates annual policy recommendations to help guide legislators in the continued fight against cervical cancer, paying particular attention to gaps in current policy and the need to address the availability of new technologies. Women In Government's policy recommendations were developed by a bipartisan HPV & Cervical Cancer State Legislative Task Force, comprised of women state legislators from across the country, and subsequently approved by the Board of Directors.

Role of Statewide Accountable Entities

States should ensure that statewide cervical cancer task forces or other proactive accountable entities are informed about and address new information and data about cervical cancer/HPV, including opportunities to establish an adolescent "well visit." States should consider legislative action that may be required to update and extend the parameters of task force timelines, members, etc.

Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program and Other Federal Funds Available to States

States should maximize resources and direct dedicated funding streams to support program infrastructure and provide education to policymakers about VFC and 317 funding. State departments of health should develop and implement plans to ensure all girls and women aged 9 through 26 have access to and receive FDA-approved cervical cancer/HPV vaccines, with an emphasis on the routine vaccination of 11- and 12-year-old girls.

Pre-Teen and Adolescent School Entrance Requirements

Recognizing that requiring vaccines for school entry has helped to provide equal access to critical immunizations throughout history, regardless of one's socioeconomic status or other factors, states should consider including HPV vaccines for the prevention of cervical cancer for girls entering middle school in conjunction with other vaccines required at this time with the same parental opt-out in accordance with states' existing exemption allowances (e.g., medical, religious and/or philosophical).

Insurance Coverage

States should strongly encourage insurance providers to adequately cover FDA-approved cervical cancer/HPV vaccines, Pap tests and HPV tests. States should also authorize health departments and other health centers to establish a process to bill private insurance providers for services rendered. States should encourage employers to buy plans with HPV screening and vaccine inclusion.



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Special Populations

States should require Medicaid to cover FDA-approved cervical cancer/HPV screening technologies and vaccines for eligible women. States should ensure that public health programs (screening and vaccination) are adequately funded and utilized to ensure that all other uninsured or underinsured females have access to cervical cancer/HPV vaccination and screening, with a goal of eliminating healthcare disparities (based on income, geographic location, country of origin, race/culture or other factors) and reaching these underinsured and uninsured populations.

Education & Awareness

States should develop awareness campaigns to educate the public about cervical cancer/HPV. Existing statewide entities focused on cancer prevention and/or health should take the lead on developing partnerships with other like-minded organizations and executing programs to educate and involve stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, providers, parents, men, women, school administrators, advocacy groups, etc.) about cervical cancer, HPV, and the role of available preventive technologies. States should help women ages 19–64 identify the questions they should ask regarding their cervical health and inform women who are eligible for Medicare about available screening benefits. Legislators need to be educated to ensure already budgeted monies are not supplanted by additional appropriations or donations.

Women In Government hopes that key stakeholders will continue to work collaboratively toward the goal of eliminating cervical cancer. Newly available technologies, like HPV vaccines and HPV testing, make complete prevention of cervical cancer a reality. Issues of disparity in cervical cancer incidence require all interested parties to work together to level the playing field in terms of access to screening and preventive services, insurance coverage and education. This report provides information and tools to support progress in fighting this deadly disease. Women In Government encourages all who read this report to take the challenge and work with us to eliminate cervical cancer.

Next Steps

As this report illustrates, there is substantial variation in progress with cervical cancer prevention efforts—especially for underserved populations—across the states. Among the steps that states need to take to make effective cervical cancer prevention a reality for women at all socioeconomic levels is increased funding for screening and vaccination programs to ensure access, including access for women who are uninsured or underinsured. State also could improve vaccination uptake by conducting or expanding public education programs about the availability, safety and efficacy of the cervical cancer vaccine. And, as indicated by the continued higher rates of cervical cancer incidence and mortality among minority populations and the lack of access to screening services for low-income women, special efforts are required to ensure that these populations are both aware of the need for cervical cancer screening and the availability of the vaccine and actually have access to these life-saving services.