



Founded in 1997, the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved (CCMU) is a membership-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Denver. CCMU develops and advocates for public policies that provide access to affordable, timely, and quality health care for everyone in Colorado.

**Mission Statement:** *The Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved is committed to access to affordable, timely, quality health care for everyone in Colorado.* CCMU believes that health care coverage should be universal, continuous, and affordable to individuals and families, and will seek solutions that are sound and sustainable, and that keeps the needs of patients first. CCMU believes that only a comprehensive solution will ensure health care for all while controlling costs and promoting quality care. In the absence of a comprehensive solution, CCMU will embrace policies and programs that improve access to quality care, expand existing health care access, and protect and strengthen the medical safety net.

**History:** In February 1997, then-President of the Colorado Medical Society, Dr. Gary VanderArk, convened a meeting to engage the Denver community around the issue of the medically underserved. Out of that meeting, grew the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved. From its inception, CCMU has had great diversity in its membership, representing health care providers, insurance providers, business groups, advocates, and consumers.

Until 2004, the organization's primary activities were research and coalition-building around healthcare issues. CCMU developed guiding principles, the center point of which was a belief that reforms should incorporate, rather than destroy, the current system. Taking steps toward comprehensive reform, CCMU facilitated task forces to address critical issues, including: expanding current public health care programs; engaging small businesses in the debate; exploring health care financing and tax credit options; addressing prescription drug coverage; and compiling nationwide best practices in health care reform. Significant legislative successes developed with CCMU's input, most notably Amendment 35, which increased Colorado's tobacco tax to provide increased health care funding.

CCMU hired a full-time Executive Director and became an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization in 2004. Since that time, the organization has continued its initial work but has also become more directly involved in policy development and advocacy.

**Current Initiatives:** CCMU's primary initiatives at this time are working to provide access to care for Colorado children through the **KidzBlitz** program and the **2010: All Kids Covered Initiative**. Together, these programs seek to expand access to and improve care in publicly funded programs such as Medicaid and the Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+). Through volunteers, KidzBlitz reaches out to families whose children may qualify for public programs and helps them to navigate through their options and the application process. The 2010 Initiative, a collaborative effort of more than 50 organizations, seeks to provide health coverage for all Colorado children by the year 2010 through legislation and strong public policy. CCMU also sponsors an annual conference, resources for those looking for insurance or help with health care, and numerous publications on topics critical to the health care debate.

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