



HEALTHCARE

Why this issue is important

- Approximately 15% (82,000) of San Franciscans 18-65 are uninsured. In addition, 120,000 San Franciscans were without health insurance for at least part of the previous year.¹
- Approximately 46,000 employed San Franciscans lack health insurance.²
- The most common reasons cited by workers who work for wages for being uninsured include the employer not offering health benefits (69%), not being eligible for coverage (15%), or declining to accept coverage offered (17%).³
- From 2001 to 2005, the percentage of children enrolled in Medi-Cal /Healthy Families/Healthy Kids in San Francisco has increased from 24.3% to 29.3%.⁴

Background

Through listening to neighbors and fellow congregants, as well as conducting research with policy experts, SFOP leaders learned that between 45-57% of San Francisco children did not have health coverage. Many working class families said that getting sick was “a luxury we can’t afford.” Some had debts as much as \$120,000 for medical expenses.

The SFOP Campaign to Provide Universal Healthcare

Taking an incremental, pragmatic approach to policy change, SFOP leaders called on public officials to:

- Preserve the healthcare safety net for the poorest among us through increased funding for local community clinics.
- Expand health coverage for children and adults.
- Direct and expand resources for healthcare in California and the U.S.

SFOP member institutions Mission Dolores Church (Mission/Castro), Corpus Christi Church (Excelsior), Star of the Sea (Richmond District) and Congregation Sha’ar Zahav (Mission/Castro) led SFOP’s healthcare campaign, engaging their congregations deeply, and encouraging the participation of SFOP members across the city.

Hundreds of members of SFOP also participated in several PICO action meetings in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., involving thousands of faith leaders from around the state and country. Through this campaign, we worked in coalition with numerous other organizations, including Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, SEIU 790, San Francisco Health Plan, SF Chamber of Commerce, and Mission Neighborhood Health Center.

Measurable Results

- ✓ Won \$200,000 for Mission Neighborhood Health Center and Excelsior Clinic for Women and Children.
- ✓ Saved Excelsior Clinic and the public pharmacy at SF General Hospital.
- ✓ Won Healthy Kids program to provide universal healthcare for children regardless of documentation status (2001).
- ✓ Sponsored events that enrolled more than 2,000 children in Healthy Kids.
- ✓ Won Healthy San Francisco – a first-in-the-country program to provide universal healthcare to all 82,000 uninsured San Franciscans.

¹⁻³ San Francisco Health Plan

⁴ Kidsdata.org

SFOP Healthcare Timeline

2004

In partnership with the Senior Action Network, the Bethel AME local organizing committee held a community action with various state and local representatives. Leaders asked for greater statewide legislation to advance the OURx Bill of Rights, a local public awareness campaign about low cost generic and therapeutic alternatives, and the regulation of exploitative pharmaceutical marketing techniques. As a result of the action, the San Francisco Department of Public Health launched a new website with information about buying drugs from Canada. The website is a crucial component of a public awareness campaign Bethel leaders have been advocating for to help seniors get information on cheaper prescription drugs.

2002

We worked in partnership with the SF Health Plan and launched the Healthy Kids program. This program ensures that for as little as \$4.00 a month a child in San Francisco can receive medical, dental and vision health coverage regardless of immigration status. To date, we have enrolled over 2,000 children.

2000

On May 2, 2000 five hundred SFOP leaders joined 2,500 other leaders from the PICO California Project for a statewide forum on health care. As a result of that action, 1) The Governor is seeking to provide health insurance coverage for 600,000 adults through the Healthy Families Program, 2) the state allocated \$50 million in funding for community clinic infrastructure throughout California (clinics often serve as the first line of defense for uninsured families), and 3) The Governor agreed to streamline Medi-Cal through requiring only annual re-certification instead of quarterly.

SFOP leaders from Mission Dolores Church took the lead in a nine month campaign to save the pharmacy at SF General Hospital, which provides free and low-cost medicine to thousands of low-income San Franciscans every year. They held an action with 200 Latino families in April, where they urged Dr. Mitchell Katz, Director of the Department of Public Health to keep the pharmacy open. In collaboration with healthcare workers, other non-profits and labor unions we have finally been able to celebrate a compromise with the city to keep the pharmacy open.

1999

SFOP held a Health Care and Education Action Meeting at the Church of the Visitation, asking Governor Davis to use the State's share of the tobacco settlement money to insure working families. With over 500 people in attendance, many Spanish and Chinese speaking, members of the Governor's staff, as well as City Officials, heard powerful testimony from SFOP leaders about the need for health care for all San Franciscans.

SFOP worked intensively on the passage of Proposition A, the ballot initiative which had San Francisco voters commit \$299 million to replace Laguna Honda Hospital. Led by St. John's UCC Local Organizing Committee, SFOP helped the ballot to pass with a 73% margin, comfortably over the needed 67% of the vote. This work was in coalition with Local 250, San Francisco's health care worker's union.

