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Fast Facts About Group Health

Group Health is a nonprofit health care system that provides both medical coverage and care. More than 540,000 residents in Washington state and North Idaho are covered by health plans offered by Group Health Cooperative or its wholly owned subsidiary, Group Health Options, Inc. More than 70 percent of members receive care in Group Health-owned medical facilities.

The Group Health family of organizations includes Group Health Cooperative (1947) with its research arm—the Group Health Care Center for Health Studies (1983), Group Health Options, Inc. (1990), Group Health Permanente medical group (1997), and Group Health Community Foundation (1983). These organizations—and the staff who support them—share a common purpose to transform health care, working together to improve the care and well-being of members, patients, and communities.

Group Health Cooperative was opened in 1947 by a community coalition dedicated to making quality health care available and affordable. Today it is one of the few health care organizations in the country governed by consumers rather than internal executives. Its 11-member Board of Trustees—all health-plan members elected by other members—work closely with management and medical staff to ensure that the organization’s policies and direction put the needs of patients first.

Group Health Cooperative, together with its subsidiary Group Health Options, Inc., operates in all or parts of 20 counties in Washington and two counties in North Idaho. In Washington, Group Health Cooperative offers coordinated-care plans for both groups and individuals, a Medicare plan, and a plan for residents who qualify for Healthy Options (Medicaid), Basic Health, and the State Children’s Health Insurance Plan.

Care is provided by Group Health Permanente doctors and other clinicians at Group Health-operated medical facilities. In service areas where Group Health doesn’t own facilities and for plans offering more choice, a network of more than 6,500 community clinicians and 39 hospitals meets member health care needs.

Group Health Options, Inc., was incorporated in 1990 as a wholly owned subsidiary of Group Health Cooperative. It offers a variety of health plans in Washington and Idaho that provide choice and flexibility to meet the needs of large and small employers. These range from a defined physician–network plan to point-of-service plans in which members can get care from outside the network for higher out-of-pocket costs.
Group Health Permanente. Physicians have played a key role in Group Health Cooperative’s history and continue to oversee every aspect of clinical care and quality. Their commitment to family medicine and prevention has shaped a broad approach to care at Group Health, one that focuses on the whole patient, not just an illness or condition.

After more than 50 years as Group Health staff, our doctors formed Group Health Permanente (GHP), an independent professional corporation, in 1997. This multispecialty medical group—the largest in Washington state—is under exclusive contract to provide care in Group Health–owned or operated facilities, and works in partnership with Group Health Cooperative management.

Group Health Center for Health Studies conducts epidemiologic, health-services, and clinical research related to prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of major health problems. Funded primarily through government and private research grants, the center is located in Seattle. It has 220 full- and part-time staff, including some 40 university faculty members. Since the center's founding, researchers have published more than 1,680 scientific journal articles—many of these collaborations with researchers from the University of Washington, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and other institutions. CHS research has helped Group Health become a national leader in areas such as breast cancer screening, immunization, and chronic disease management.

Group Health Community Foundation uses grantmaking, school outreach, fund-raising, and evaluation consulting to improve the health of children and teens and promote diversity in health care. The Foundation is Group Health’s philanthropic arm and has awarded more than $55 million in grants since 1983. In 2005, the Foundation anticipates awarding more than $590,000 in grants to community groups and Group Health programs.

PURPOSE, MISSION, AND VALUES

Purpose. Group Health exists to transform health care, working together every day to improve the care and well-being of our consumers and communities.

Mission. Group Health is a consumer-governed organization whose mission is to design, finance, and deliver high-quality health care.

Values. In carrying out our purpose and mission, we demonstrate these core values: respect, scientific discipline, integrity, pioneering spirit, and stewardship.

GOVERNANCE

Group Health is one of the few consumer-governed health care organizations in the country. All health plan participants 18 years and older are eligible to become voting members at no additional cost. Voting members elect the 11-member Board of Trustees and decide on organizational bylaw amendments and policy-related advisory resolutions. There are more than 33,500 voting members.

Members also influence care and policy by becoming Board committee members (addressing areas such as benefits and appeals), serving on focus groups that evaluate care and service issues, participating on local advisory councils, or joining the Senior Caucus to advocate for senior health care needs.
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