



PAR: Health-care plan ‘promising’

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A study panel’s recommendations to alter health care for uninsured people in and around hurricane-struck New Orleans are “surprisingly promising,” but the panel has more work to do, a private think tank said Monday.

“The initial outline for reform of the New Orleans region has been submitted to federal officials,” The Public Affairs Research Council noted in a commentary.

Now, “The Louisiana Health Care Redesign Collaborative should exercise the authority already granted to it to develop a statewide redesign plan for health-care delivery that integrates all LSU charity hospitals and the LSU medical schools into the reform options,” PAR said.

“The collaborative’s planning results, so far, include surprisingly promising recommendations. If implemented, these proposals could produce fundamental changes in the health-care delivery system that ultimately would improve the health status of the low-income population in the New Orleans region,” the group said.

“Unfortunately, redesign planning has excluded consideration of the charity hospital system and the rest of the state outside of the New Orleans region. The impact of the storms ranges far outside the four-parish New Orleans region,” PAR said.

PAR gave the collaborative credit for making progress in:

- Planning for better record maintenance.
- Transparency of performance measures.
- The development of medical homes for indigent care.
- Expansion of insurance coverage for the entire low-income population of the New Orleans region.

However, “federal officials have expressed dissatisfaction with the progress being made toward eliminating the state’s second-class tier of health care,” PAR noted.

That two-tiered process allows LSU to plan for a \$650 million, 350-bed replacement hospital in New Orleans independent of the state's official health care planning entity and "makes no sense," PAR said.

"A complete and accurate redesign plan, whether regional or statewide, would redirect sufficient funds earmarked for care of the uninsured from charity hospitals to the private insurance option that the Collaborative is recommending," PAR said.

"The state does not have sufficient resources to expand health-care coverage and continue to fund the antiquated charity hospital system at current levels."