

## What is the Human Right to Health?

Every person has basic human rights that are common to all human beings, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, language, income, religion, sexuality, age, or disability. These rights exist independent of government recognition and are the same for everyone.

The human right to health is indispensable to our inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Health is fundamental to the well-being of all human beings and to our pursuit of fulfilling lives. While we cannot claim a right to be healthy, we do have the right to be as healthy as possible, within the limits posed by our bodies and behaviors.

Many external factors influence our health, such as our environment, housing and workplace conditions, and medical care. In so far as all these are shaped by society, government has an obligation to protect our health and to help us be as healthy as possible.

- The human right to health **guarantees a system of health protection**.
- To protect health, everyone has the right to appropriate health care, and to living conditions that give us the opportunity to be healthy, such as adequate food, housing, and a healthy environment.
- Health care is a public good, with costs and benefits shared by all. We have a right to get the health care we need, and a responsibility to ensure that everyone else can do the same.

## Key Principles of the Human Right to Health Care

The human right to health care means that hospitals, clinics, medicines and doctor's services must be **accessible, available, acceptable**, and of good **quality** for everyone, on an equitable basis, where and when needed.

Health care must be financed and delivered in a **non-discriminatory** way that enables the **participation** of individuals and communities, provides access to **information**, ensures **transparency** of institutions and processes, and has effective mechanisms to hold both private sector and government agencies **accountable**.

These human rights principles set the parameters for health care reform. They enable advocates to raise the bar for reform efforts and develop a roadmap for moving toward a health care system in which everyone in the United States is able to get the care they need.

## Where is the Human Right to Health Recognized?

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25)\*
- American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man (Article 11) \*
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 12)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 5) \*
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Articles 12 & 14)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 24)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 25)

\* The United States has committed to these Declarations and Conventions.