

Survey Finds Thousands of Pastors Lack Health Insurance

Many denominational pastors say they receive little or no assistance for health care insurance from their national organizations.



[] A recent survey found that a majority of denominational pastors receive little or no health care assistance from their national organizations.

The poll, conducted by the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), found that most pastors find alternative ways to gain health insurance coverage.

Many of the pastors who responded to the survey said they receive health insurance coverage from a part-time job, spouse's insurance plan or by purchasing individual policies; others said they went without coverage.

"Thousands of pastors ... are among the millions of Americans without health insurance," NAE President Leith Anderson said in a statement.

Some denominations tried to provide centralized health coverage but were unable to sustain it due to rising costs, difficulty securing coverage in multiple states and an inability to balance insurance premiums for both young and old ministers, the study said.

"We have tried two or three times to provide health insurance, but we have not been able to make it work," the head of one Pentecostal denomination told the NAE.

Although some organizations are able to provide centralized health insurance, Anderson believes the lack of coverage for the majority of clergy is a "growing problem."

"So many churches are small, and too many pastors are uninsured," he said. "As clergy age with the rest of America's population we may see a growing list of pastors entering retirement with bankrupting medical bills."

The NAE, based in Washington, D.C., represents millions of Christians from more than 60 denominations, including the Assemblies of God and the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.).