

Study suggests average wait to see primary care physicians increased in Massachusetts.

The [AP](#) (9/22) reported, "A study by the state's largest doctors group has found that the average wait to see a primary care physician in Massachusetts in 2008 has grown to an average of 36 days, two more days than last year." The Massachusetts Medical Society study also revealed that "it can take as much as 100 days to see a doctor in some rural parts of the state." Meanwhile, over the past four years, "the number of practices accepting new patients has dropped." The state's mandate for universal coverage has "provided insurance coverage to about 439,000 additional Bay State residents since the law went into effect in 2006," which is "one reason it is taking longer to see a doctor."

The [Boston Globe](#) (9/22, Kowalczyk) added that although "the Legislature has approved an unprecedented set of financial incentives for young physicians," experts "fear the new measures will take several years to ease the shortage." The law "includes \$1.5 million this year to help the University of Massachusetts Medical School expand its class size." Massachusetts has also agreed to "repay medical school loans of doctors who agree to work in community health centers, and...to pay off debt for doctors who agree to work in primary care in underserved areas for at least two years." The Globe noted, that "a national primary care shortage has been looming for several years as doctors retire or leave the specialty," and "fewer new doctors are entering the field," according to a "survey published this month in the Journal of the American Medical Association."

In the [Wall Street Journal's](#) (9/22) Health Blog, Sarah Rubenstein noted that the increased wait times in Massachusetts "sound a cautionary note on the perils of universal health coverage: Once people have coverage, there needs to be capacity to treat them." [UPI](#) (9/22) also reported on the new law.