



CMS Snapshot

December 2-9, 2021

Delivered to you by the Partner Relations Group in the Office of Communications

All releases below are from 2pm Thursday, December 2 through 2pm December 9, 2021.

News Releases

*December 3- [New HHS Study Shows 63-Fold Increase in Medicare Telehealth Utilization During the Pandemic](#). A new report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) found that massive increases in the use of telehealth helped maintain some health care access during the COVID-19 pandemic, with specialists like behavioral health providers seeing the highest telehealth utilization relative to other providers. The report, which was produced by researchers in HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) and analyzes Medicare fee for service (FFS) data in 2019 and 2020, also highlights that telehealth services were accessed more in urban areas than rural communities, and Black Medicare beneficiaries were less likely than White beneficiaries to utilize telehealth.

*December 3- [HHS Strengthens Prevention of Human Trafficking and Support for Survivors in National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking](#). Today, the White House released the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, recognizing the impact of human trafficking on public health, public safety, and national security. The Action Plan's comprehensive framework reaffirms the U.S. government's commitment to preventing and responding to human trafficking, emphasizing the importance of collaboration to ensure short- and long-term well-being.

*December 3- [Statement by HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra on Release of Department's Division-Level COVID-19 Vaccination Data](#). As a follow up to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) release last week of federal COVID-19 vaccination data for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and other federal agencies, today HHS released vaccination data for its Divisions, which show that some have exceeded the Department's vaccination rate of more than *97 percent. In response, Secretary Xavier Becerra released the following statement.

*December 7- [HHS Announces Efforts to Help Expand Nationwide Access and Coverage for High-quality Maternal Health Services](#). As part of Vice President Kamala Harris's Call to Action to Reduce Maternal Mortality and Morbidity, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), is taking steps to improve maternal health and support the delivery of equitable, high-quality care for pregnancy and postpartum care. CMS intends to propose a "Birthing-Friendly" designation to drive improvements in perinatal health outcomes and maternal health equity.

*December 7- [U.S. Surgeon General Issues Advisory on Youth Mental Health Crisis Further Exposed by COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Today, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued a new Surgeon General's Advisory to highlight the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis. As the nation continues the work to protect the health and safety of America's youth during this pandemic with the pediatric vaccine push amid concerns of the emerging omicron variant, the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health outlines the pandemic's unprecedented impacts on the mental health of America's youth and families, as well as the mental health challenges that existed long before the pandemic.

*December 7- [Secretary Becerra Delivers Remarks at White House Maternal Health Call to Action Summit](#). *As Prepared for Delivery*. "Thank you to Vice President Harris and the White House for hosting us, and for your critical leadership over the past year. And thank you to all the advocates gathered here today for your work to end the crisis of maternal mortality."

*December 7- [HHS Announces Efforts to Help Expand Nationwide Access and Coverage for High-quality Maternal Health Services](#). As part of Vice President Kamala Harris's Call to Action to Reduce Maternal Mortality and Morbidity, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), is taking steps to improve maternal health and support the delivery of equitable, high-quality care for pregnancy and postpartum care. CMS intends to propose a "Birthing-Friendly" designation to drive improvements in perinatal health outcomes and maternal health equity.

*December 8- [HHS Awards \\$82 Million in American Rescue Plan Funding to Expand Home Visiting Assistance for Families Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), today awarded approximately \$82 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) emergency home visiting funds to 56 states, jurisdictions, and nonprofit organizations to support children and families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding builds upon an initial investment of \$40 million in ARP funds in May. The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program supports the delivery of high quality, voluntary, evidence-based home visiting services to children and families living in communities at risk for poor maternal and child health outcomes.

*December 8- [SAMHSA Announces Unprecedented \\$30 Million Harm Reduction Grant Funding Opportunity to Help Address the Nation's Substance Use and Overdose Epidemic](#). The

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is now accepting applications for the first-ever SAMHSA Harm Reduction grant program and expects to issue \$30 million in grant awards. This funding, authorized by the American Rescue Plan, will help increase access to a range of community harm reduction services and support harm reduction service providers as they work to help prevent overdose deaths and reduce health risks often associated with drug use. SAMHSA will accept applications from State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments, Tribal organizations, non-profit community-based organizations, and primary and behavioral health organizations.

*December 8- [HHS and HUD announce expanded partnership, new Housing and Services Resource Center](#). Today, the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) and the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD) announced the expansion of a [partnership - PDF](#) established earlier this year to improve access to affordable, accessible housing and the critical services that make community living possible. The partners also announced the launch of a national Housing and Services Resource Center (HSRC) as the hub of this coordinated federal effort. Today's announcement builds on President Biden's [Executive Order](#) establishing a government-wide commitment to advancing equity, including for people with disabilities, as well as additional [commitments](#) announced in July on the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

*December 8- [Secretary Becerra Delivers Remarks During Joint HHS-ONDCP Press Call on Biden-Harris Administration Harm Reduction Investments](#). *Announces SAMHSA's First-Ever Harm Reduction Grant Program. As Prepared for Delivery.* Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us. Today, we're here to discuss a crisis that has taken far too many lives across the nation. Synthetic opioids, like fentanyl, stimulants -- like methamphetamine and cocaine -- and other drugs are harming our citizens at an alarming rate.

*December 9- [HHS Announces Increased Marketplace Enrollment Trends with Nearly 4.6 Million New Plan Selections Since Open Enrollment's Start](#). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a new monthly National Marketplace Open Enrollment report shows that, so far, nearly 4.6 million Americans have signed up for 2022 health coverage through HealthCare.gov and State-based Marketplaces since the start of the 2022 Open Enrollment Period on November 1.

*December 9- [HHS Announces Increased Marketplace Enrollment Trends with Nearly 4.6 Million New Plan Selections Since Open Enrollment's Start](#). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a new monthly National Marketplace Open Enrollment report shows that, so far, nearly 4.6 million Americans have signed up for 2022 health coverage through HealthCare.gov and State-based Marketplaces since the start of the 2022 Open Enrollment Period on November 1. The assistance from the American Rescue Plan continues to drive affordability and accessibility of health coverage with the number of consumers getting coverage for \$10 or less per month after tax credits nearly doubling compared to this time last

year. Ninety five percent of consumers in HealthCare.gov states are receiving premium tax credits to lower the cost of their monthly premiums.

*December 9- [HHS Secretary Becerra Names Dr. Lawrence Tabak Acting Director of NIH](#). Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra today announced that Lawrence A. Tabak, D.D.S., Ph.D., the principal deputy director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), will serve as the acting director of NIH effective December 20, 2021.

*December 9- [HHS Selects Phase 1 Winners of Competition to Decrease Rates of Hypertension among Pregnant and Postpartum Women](#). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women's Health announced the 20 winners of Phase I of the HHS [Hypertension Innovator Award Competition](#). The competition was created to identify effective, pre-existing programs that care for people with hypertension where the programs could be or are already applied to women with hypertension who are pregnant and/or postpartum. The goal of the competition is to demonstrate sustainability and the ability to replicate and/or expand programs that provide effective monitoring and follow-up of hypertension for women who are pregnant and/or postpartum.

Blogs

*December 8- [Make your next Medicare premium payment online](#). Spend less time paying your bills—pay your Medicare Part B premium online. If you get this [bill from Medicare](#) for your premiums, you may be able to pay it online with a credit or debit card.

*December 8- [Get help with Medicare costs](#). If you have Medicare and you're facing challenges paying for health care, you may qualify for Medicare programs that can help you save money on drug and medical costs.

*December 8- [Interoperability and the Connected Health Care System](#). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed many shortcomings in our health care system, especially the ability to quickly share and use reliable data to better understand the health needs of all people across the country. This need for more accessible data is why the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) remains committed to making health care data flow more freely and securely among payers, providers, and patients by laying the foundation to foster a more connected health care system.

*December 9- [Last chance: Act by Dec 15 for coverage that starts Jan 1](#). This is the last chance to get 2022 Marketplace health insurance that starts January 1. The deadline is Wednesday, December 15. That means you have only 6 days to enroll in, re-enroll in, or change 2022 Marketplace coverage that starts January 1. You don't want to miss out on affordable coverage that meets your needs and budget.

Fact Sheet

*December 9- [Marketplace 2022 Open Enrollment Period Report: National Snapshot](#). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) reports that nearly 4.6 million Americans have signed up for 2022 individual market health insurance coverage through the Marketplaces since the start of the 2022 Marketplace Open Enrollment Period (OEP) on November 1.

CMS has developed a [Virtual Toolkit](#) to help you stay informed on CMS and HHS materials available on the COVID-19. Please share these materials, bookmark the page, and check back often for the most up-to-date information. For more information, please email partnership@cms.hhs.gov