



HEALTH EQUITY QUARTERLY

ISSUE 7 | Fall 2022



Director's Message

Welcome to the Fall 2022 edition of Health Equity Quarterly, this newsletter highlights the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Office of Minority Health's (CMS OMH) activities, messages from leadership, and some of the great work the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is doing to address health care disparities.

On November 17, we celebrate National Rural Health Day, and throughout November, our office is recognizing the unique health care needs of individuals that live in rural, tribal, frontier, and geographically isolated communities and territories. Of distinction is the recent inclusion of geographically isolated communities in the rural populations that we serve, which will allow the Agency to continue to expand its health equity reach in rural communities.

CMS recognizes that more than 57 million Americans live in rural areas and face several unique challenges. Those challenges can differ dramatically among the different kinds of rural areas across the country. Rural residents tend to be older and in poorer health than their urban counterparts, and rural communities often face challenges with access to care, financial viability, and the important link between health care and economic development.

CMS OMH recognizes that enhancing rural health care access and quality is an essential part of our efforts to improve health equity. We have been listening to stakeholder feedback on rural health care access and quality, and have leveraged that feedback to

inform the updated CMS Framework for Advancing Health Care in Rural, Tribal, and Geographically Isolated Communities. In alignment with these efforts, we'd like to highlight the following recently released resources that highlight the Agency's plans for advancing rural health and can be used to help the rural populations that you serve:

- [Advancing Rural Health Equity \(PDF\)](#) – This recently released report outlines the various ways that CMS has gone the “extra mile” over the past year to meet the needs of rural populations, highlighting activities across 10 areas of particular importance to rural health. Topics assessed in the report include Medicare, the rural health workforce, models and demonstrations, maternal health, and COVID-19.
- [CMS Framework for Advancing Health Care in Rural, Tribal, and Geographically Isolated Communities \(PDF\)](#) – This recently released report builds on the previously released [Rural Health Strategy](#) and aligns with the [CMS Framework for Health Equity 2022 – 2032](#) to improve health equity and reduce health disparities in rural, tribal, and geographically isolated communities. In supporting the agencies commitment to engaging with stakeholders, this framework reflects the feedback obtained from a wide audience of over 1,000 individuals across several public listening sessions. Make sure to check out this blog post that outlines priority areas included in the Framework.
- [Rural-Urban Disparities in Health Care in Medicare \(PDF\)](#) – This report describes rural-urban differences in health care experiences and clinical care received nationally.
- Visit our [Rural Health webpage](#) to find additional resources designed for the more than 50 million Americans that live in rural, tribal, frontier, and geographically isolated territories.

Additionally, on November 15, CMS OMH hosted the National Rural Health Day Webinar: CMS Framework for Advancing Health Care in Rural, Tribal, and Geographically Isolated Communities. This discussion allowed us to highlight the Agency's strategy for enhancing health care in rural, tribal, frontier, and geographically isolated communities.

To continue receiving updates from CMS OMH about rural health care policy and programs, please sign up for our [Rural Health listserv](#).

- Dr. LaShawn McIver

Rural Health

Research and Data Updates

CMS OMH maintains a series of data snapshots, data highlights, and other reports. Here are the latest updates on data tools and reports published by CMS OMH:

- [Mapping Medicare Disparities \(MMD\) Tool](#) – The MMD Tool, which allows users to identify areas of disparities between subgroups of Medicare enrollees (e.g., racial and ethnic groups) in health outcomes, utilization, and spending, has been updated to include 2020 Fee-For-Service (FFS) data and 2021 FFS preliminary data. Watch the recently updated [MMD Tool video](#) for an overview of how to leverage the MMD Tool.
- [Tobacco Use Disparities in Medicare FFS Beneficiaries](#) – This recently updated data snapshot outlines the prevalence of tobacco use among Medicare FFS enrollees varied by year, age, sex, race and ethnicity, eligibility for Medicare and Medicaid, and geographic areas.
- [The Path Forward: Improving Data to Advance Health Equity Solutions](#) builds on the first priority of the CMS Framework for Health Equity to describe the current state of health equity data collection and consolidation across CMS programs, including issues and challenges, detail progress to date in improving CMS data completeness, quality, and alignment to standards, and define CMS’s future actions to continue the improvement of health equity data and achieve a future vision of health equity data at CMS.

Research and Data

Equity Initiatives

- [2022 Minority Research Grant Program \(MRGP\) Awardees](#) Announced - CMS OMH is proud to announce three recipients will be awarded grants to expand our commitment to advancing health equity among the populations we serve. Each grantee will receive \$333,000 in funding to support their projects, which will examine critical public health disparities and increase health equity research capacities at minority-serving institutions. The three grantees are The Board of Trustees at the University of Illinois, Prairie View A&M University, and University of Hawaii. Stay tuned for more updates about the 2023 MRGP application cycle.
- [Connecting Kids to Coverage \(CKC\): CMS Releases Connecting Kids to Coverage HEALTHY KIDS American Indian/Alaska Native 2023 Outreach and Enrollment Cooperative Agreements Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) - The CKC HEALTHY KIDS American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) 2023 Outreach and Enrollment Cooperative Agreement program provides funding to reduce the number of AI/AN children who are eligible for, but not enrolled in, Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and to improve retention of eligible children who are enrolled in the programs. Applications for this NOFO will be accepted through **December 20, 2022**. For more information, visit the CKC outreach and enrollment grants [webpage](#).

- [HHS Awards \\$4 Million for a New Language Access Initiative](#) - HHS OMH recently announced more than \$4 million in grants to 11 organizations for an initiative called Promoting Equitable Access to Language Services in Health and Human Services. This three-year initiative covers developing and testing methods for informing individuals with limited English proficiency about the availability of language access services in health care-related settings.

CMS Office of Minority Health