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HEALTH EQUITY GUIDE

August 2022



August: National Immunization Awareness and Breastfeeding Month

The CDC is promoting [resources](#) for health professionals to communicate about vaccinations.

The US Breastfeeding Committee's 2022 theme celebrates the power of collective action and has several [resources](#) to promote breastfeeding.

[Transition to 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline has Occurred](#)

On July 16, the United States transitioned to a new number - 988 – for its Suicide & Crisis Lifeline from the previous 1-800-273-8255 number, which remains active. It is a national 24/7 crisis care hotline; and a joint effort from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to put crisis care more in reach for people in need.

The [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) is a network of more than 200 state and local call centers supported by HHS through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SAMHSA has also created a [toolkit](#) for partners to explain 988 and how it works.

Since the founding of the previous 10-digit Lifeline in 2005, it has received over 30 million calls from people in crisis.

[CMS Proposes Rule to Advance Health Equity, Improve Access to Care, and Promote Competition and Transparency](#)

The Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is establishing policies for [Rural Emergency Hospitals](#) to advance health equity and improve access to care in rural communities. The rule protects access to emergency care and additional outpatient services. In over 10 years, 138 rural hospitals have closed and in areas that have disproportionate numbers of people of color and communities with higher poverty rates.

CMS will also provide payment for certain behavioral health services provided via communications technology since some of the flexibilities for remote behavioral health are now expiring with the conclusion of the COVID-19 public health emergency. In addition, the rule also adjusts payments for domestically made N95 respirators.

Rural/CAH Corner

[HHS Announces \\$10 Million for Rural Communities to Expand Treatment for Opioid Overdoses](#)

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) announced \$10 million in funding for rural communities to address fentanyl and fentanyl-laced overdoses.

[Cancer Treatment and Prevention in Rural Areas](#)

This in-depth review of cancer treatment and prevention in rural areas highlights that rural populations more often have cancer types related to modifiable behavior e.g., tobacco use. Also, racial and ethnic groups face barriers to cancer screening but experience higher rates of certain cancer types.

In the News

[CMS Innovation Center Tackles Implicit Bias](#)

This Health Affairs article discusses CMS' review of three payment and service delivery models to assess for implicit bias, as part of its broader objective of advancing health equity in its [2022 strategic plan](#). The three models are its Kidney Care Choices Model, Comprehensive Care for Joint Replacement Model, and Million Hearts Cardiovascular Risk Reduction Model. CMS found that the use of certain risk-adjustment and screening tools led to the exclusion of Medicare beneficiaries from the models. CMS Innovation Center is developing a guide to screen and mitigate bias in its models which will be piloted for use.

[Digital Health Literacy: Why It's Important and How to Improve It](#)

This article identifies strategies healthcare providers can use to improve digital health literacy e.g., screening for regular and digital health literacy, explaining the use of digital health tools, and helping patients select online resources that provide reliable health information and assess website credibility. The National Digital Inclusion Alliance provides [resources](#) to consider for digital literacy.

[Mental Health Experiences of Older Black and Latinx Adults in the U.S. Health System](#)

This article from the Commonwealth fund highlights the cultural taboos and stigma that Latinx and Black older adults face with mental healthcare, through interviews with 88 participants. Medicare beneficiaries that are Black and Hispanic reported the highest rates of emotional distress and mental health needs, but the lack of culturally competent providers and coverage leaves them untreated.

[Tackling Implicit Bias in Health Care](#)

This New England Journal of Medicine Perspective discusses implicit and explicit biases that contribute to disparities in health and health care. It highlights strategies to address these issues such as: training to remove stigmatizing words in patient communications, active-bystander training, institutional bias-management which involves all employees, and bias reporting systems which are in use such as this [one](#) from the UW School of Medicine.



For more health equity news: <https://qi.ipro.org/health-equity-resources/>

Upcoming Events

[Health Equity Organizational Assessment \(HEOA\) Knowledge Builders Series](#)

I PRO

Date: May 19 – Aug 4

Time: 12:00 – 12:30 PM ET

[Rural Maternal Health Networks: Evaluation Findings from the First Implementation Year of the RMOMS 2019 Cohort](#)

Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies

Date: August 1

Time: 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

[Structural Violence, Gun Violence, and Health Equity](#)

Partners for Advancing Health Equity

Date: August 16

Time: 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET