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Quality Innovation Network -  
Quality Improvement Organizations  
CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES  
iQUALITY IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION GROUP



# Health Equity Updates



## The Latest in Health Equity News, Events, and Resources

**December 2021**

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# HEALTH EQUITY UPDATES



## 2021 State Scorecard on Racial & Ethnic Equity in U.S. Health Care

The 2021 Commonwealth Fund’s [State Scorecard on Health System Performance](#) reports that racial and ethnic health inequities persist in every state in the U.S., driven by multiple factors including cost, access to regular care, social risk factors and discrimination. The researchers analyzed 24 health system performance indicators from 2019 and 2020 grouped into three performance domains: health outcomes, health care access and quality, and use of health care services. Five racial/ethnic groups were evaluated: Black, White, American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN), Latinx/Hispanic and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (AANHPI). The data show that health care system performance and residents’ health varies greatly across and within states with Black, Latinx/Hispanic and AIAN people receiving suboptimal care compared to their white counterparts in almost every state. Downloadable interactive exhibits display state-by-state performance, viewable as a comparison of all five racial/ethnic groups or by individual group.

The report’s authors suggest four overarching federal and state policy recommendations to advance health equity within health care facilities:

- Ensure universal, affordable, and equitable health coverage
- Strengthen primary care and improve the delivery of services
- Reduce inequitable administrative burdens for patients and providers
- Invest in social services.

Slides and a recording of a virtual report briefing can be found [HERE](#).

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*The latest health equity news, events and resources to support the IPRO QIN-QIO efforts to eliminate health care disparities for Medicare beneficiaries.*

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## [CMS Improving Health in Rural Communities: 2021 Year in Review](#)

CMS has released an updated report that highlights the activities and accomplishments that the agency has made in improving the health and wellbeing of individuals living and working in rural, frontier, and tribal communities in fiscal year 2021. The report reviews CMS' efforts collaborating with rural communities to address barriers and build on successes to achieve optimal outcomes for rural Americans. The CMS Office of Minority Health has a Rural Health [webpage](#) with resources and information that can be distributed to providers, patients, and other organizations to improve the health of rural Americans.

## [Rural-Urban Health Disparities among U.S. Adults Ages 50 and Older](#)

According to a report from the AARP Public Policy Institute, older adult populations are growing faster in U.S. rural areas than urban areas. As of 2019, 20 million adults ages 50 and older resided in rural areas. This report analyzes indicators of health care access, health-related behaviors, and health conditions among the 50 and older age group living in rural versus urban areas to identify healthcare challenges that contribute to health disparities. The researchers' analysis found notable disparities for rural adults compared to their urban counterparts. Gaps in care are also more pronounced for Black adults compared to White adults living in rural areas. The report includes several graphs depicting the results of the analysis.

## [Census Data Equity Initiative for Underserved Communities](#)

The Census Bureau recently announced the *Census Data Equity Initiative for Underserved Communities* to advance the Bureau's commitment to "producing data that depict an accurate portrait of America, including underserved communities." The initiative includes the [Data for Equity](#) webpage with data equity services that include demographic data, [data tools](#), public assistance program metrics, diversity measurement, and data education. The [Data Equity Library](#) is an online collection of audio, infographics, photos, publications and other resources to advance equity.

## [Hispanic Adults with Peripheral Artery Disease Access Inpatient Care Most Often in the ER](#)

A new study reports that Hispanic adults in the U.S. with peripheral artery disease (PAD) were 80% more likely to access inpatient treatment via the emergency room rather than as a planned, elective hospital admission compared to non-Hispanic White adults. Hispanic adults experienced longer hospital stays and had higher hospitalization costs. The researchers presented their findings at the American Heart Association's [Quality of Care and Outcomes \(QCOR\) Research Scientific Sessions 2021](#). They noted that the ER may be the easier option to seek care due to lack of health insurance and/or legal immigrant status.

## [CMS Expands Coverage for Telehealth in Behavioral Health Care](#)

CMS issued a final rule in November that permanently expands telehealth coverage services, including audio-only services, for the treatment of behavioral health and substance abuse disorders. The changes – part of the [2022 Physician Fee Schedule](#) – allows beneficiaries to receive care in their homes "for the purposes of diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a mental health disorder." The new rule requires providers and patients to meet in person at least six months prior to adopting virtual visits, and that an in-person exam be conducted at least once every 12 months thereafter. CMS has extended dozens of telehealth services allowed during the COVID pandemic through the end of 2023 to give the Agency and providers more opportunity to study the impact of telehealth on care delivery and clinical outcomes. This new rule has the potential to especially improve mental health care for patients living in rural areas and those with disabilities.

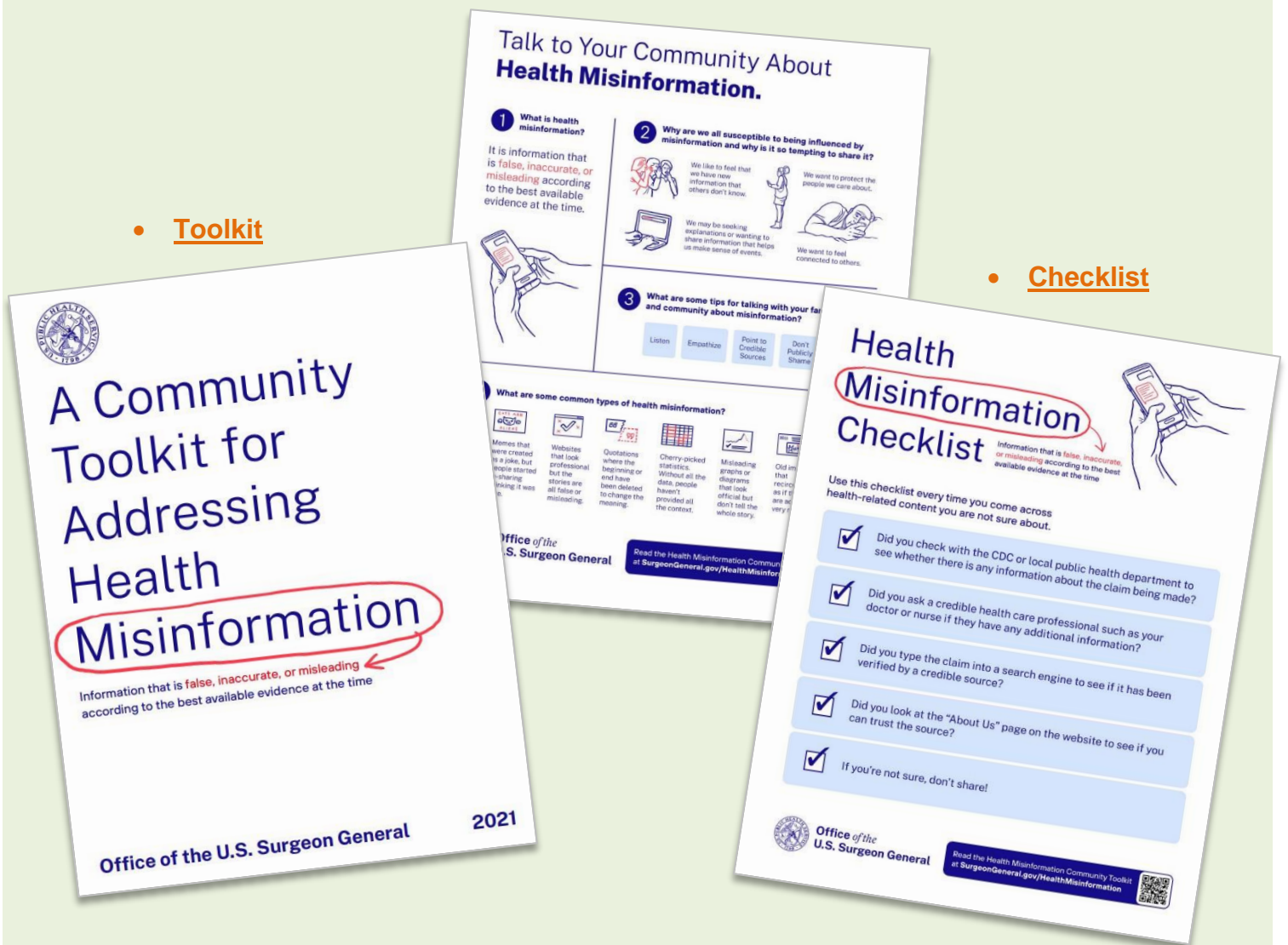
## Surgeon General's Community Toolkit for Addressing Health Misinformation

The Surgeon General's [Community Toolkit for Addressing Health Misinformation](#) provides specific guidance and resources for health care providers, educators, librarians, faith leaders, and trusted community members to understand, identify, and stop the spread of health misinformation in their communities. The toolkit, infographic and checklist are available in English. Spanish versions will be available soon.

- [Infographic](#)

- [Toolkit](#)

- [Checklist](#)





## Trending Health Equity Resources

### Center for Health Care Strategies

#### [Getting Started with a Master Plan for Aging](#)

This toolkit is a cross-sector, state-led strategic planning resource that can help states transform the infrastructure and coordination of services for the rapidly aging population. It reflects extensive input from people of all ages and abilities, actively considering the needs of populations facing racial and ethnic disparities in aging.

### CMS Office of Minority Health

#### [Mapping Medicare Disparities Tool - UPDATED](#)

The CMS Office of Minority Health recently released an updated and enhanced version of its Mapping Medicare Disparities Tool. The enhancements include the addition of preliminary 2020 Medicare fee-for-service data, COVID-19 hospitalization and prevalence rates, and an updated map legend to improve visualization. The MMD Tool is also available in [Spanish](#).

### The Commonwealth Fund

#### [The High Costs of Maternal Morbidity Show Why We Need Greater Investment in Maternal Health](#)

The Commonwealth Fund recently released an Issue Brief and Policy Report on maternal morbidity and mortality. Maternal morbidity continues to rise in the U.S. and disproportionately affects racial and ethnic minorities, and those with social disadvantages. It is estimated that maternal health complications cost the U.S. tens of billions of dollars. These reports offer a review of the data and policy recommendations to address the maternal health crisis.

#### [Policies for Reducing Maternal Morbidity and Mortality and Enhancing Equity in Maternal Health](#)

### Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)

#### [Applying an Equity Lens to Performance Improvement](#)

This IHI article discusses the importance of infusing health equity into quality improvement initiatives by taking a proactive approach, such as stratifying data using specific parameters including REAL SOGI (race, ethnicity, ancestry, language, sexual orientation, and gender identity) and assessing patients' socioeconomic conditions to mitigate inequities.

### NIH National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

#### [HDPulse: An Ecosystem of Health Disparities and Minority Health Resources](#)

HDPulse, a new online resource from the NIH, consists of two easy-to-use portals: the Data Portal, and coming soon, the Intervention Portal. The Data Portal facilitates identifying, tracking, and studying issues related to health disparities. The Intervention Portal will offer evidence-based interventions to improve minority health and reduce disparities.

### U.S. Preventive Services Task Force

#### [Actions to Mitigate Systemic Racism in Clinical Preventive Services](#)

The Preventive Services Task Force published an article in JAMA that discusses the impacts of racism on health. Those experiencing racism tend to have shorter life expectancies and experience poorer health due to preventable causes. The article outlines actions the Task Force is taking to promote antiracism and health equity in preventive care.

## Monthly Observances

December, 2021

[World AIDS Day](#) (December 1)

[National Handwashing Awareness Week](#) (December 1-7)

[National Influenza Vaccination Week](#) (December 5-11)

January, 2022

**Cervical Health Awareness Month**

**Poverty Awareness Month**

**National Glaucoma Awareness Month**

**National Blood Donor Month**



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## Upcoming IPRO Events

### Optimal Z Code Utilization & Reimbursement Opportunities

*IPRO QIN-QIO & HQIC*

**Date:** December 7, 2021

**Time:** 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM ET

[REGISTER HERE](#)

### New Day: Nursing Home Education Summit

*IPRO QIN-QIO*

**Date:** December 9, 2021

**Time:** 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM ET

[REGISTER HERE](#)

## Other Upcoming Events

### Driving Health System Transformation: A Strategy for the CMS Innovation Center's Second Decade

*CMS Innovation Center*

**Date:** December 8, 2021

**Time:** 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM ET

[REGISTER HERE](#)

### Caring for Ourselves and Each Other on the Path to Equity

*HealthBegins*

**Date:** December 15, 2021

**Time:** 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM ET

[REGISTER HERE](#)

### Economic Innovations to Support Health, Equity, and Well-Being: A Virtual Workshop

*National Academy of Medicine*

**Date:** December 16, 2021

**Time:** 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM ET

[REGISTER HERE](#)