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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

**July 2021**

Developed by Qlarant and distributed by the IPRO QIN-QIO, a collaboration of Healthcentric Advisors, Qlarant and IPRO, serving as the Medicare Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization for the New England states, NY, NJ, OH, DE, MD, and the District of Columbia, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents do not necessarily reflect CMS policy.  
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# HEALTH EQUITY UPDATES



## HHS Awards \$250M to Fight COVID-19 and Improve Health Literacy

The [HHS Office of Minority Health](#) announced \$250 million in grant awards to [73 local governments](#) for a two-year initiative to improve health literacy to enhance COVID-19 vaccination and other mitigation practices among racial and ethnic minorities and underserved populations. The initiative – Advancing Health Literacy to Enhance Equitable Community Responses to COVID-19 – is part of the Biden/Harris Administration's [National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness](#).

During the two-year grant period, which begins July 1st, awardees will demonstrate the effectiveness of working with community-based organizations to develop health literacy plans to increase the availability, acceptance, and use of COVID-19 public health information and services by racial and ethnic minorities, as well as other vulnerable populations at risk for not receiving and using the information. Awardees will leverage data to identify the targeted populations at highest risk for low health literacy and health disparities, and populations not currently reachable through existing public health campaigns.

Health literacy is one of the [overarching goals](#) of the [Healthy People 2030](#) blueprint for improving the health of the nation and is defined as the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information needed to make appropriate health decisions.

*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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## A New Guide on Universal Screening for Health-Related Social Needs

The CMS [Accountable Health Communities Model](#) (AHCM) uses the [Accountable Health Communities Social Needs Screening Tool](#) to identify health-related social needs such as food insecurity, housing instability or lack of transportation. A new [User Guide](#) can assist health care providers across care settings use the Screening Tool effectively. The Guide also provides insights and best practices for implementing universal screening for social needs based on the experiences of organizations participating in the AHCM.

## VacciNATION: Inspiring Stories on the National COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout

On this website, the American Hospital Association™ shares stories on how hospitals and health systems are vaccinating the nation through creativity, collaboration, and compassion. This website highlights several case studies and short stories on successful strategies for increasing COVID-19 vaccination rates, including among minorities and in underserved communities.

## Identifying and Addressing Social Needs in Primary Care Settings

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) released this toolkit for primary care practices considering screening for social needs. The toolkit will help primary care practices: 1) Find resources and information to get started; 2) Consider what implementation approaches might work best in their practices; and 3) Understand how the practices can use collected information to address patients' social needs, tailor care to their circumstances, and maximize reimbursement.

## Join the Age-Friendly Health Systems Action Community

The [AHA Center for Health Innovation](#) is currently recruiting for its third Age-Friendly Health Systems Action Community convening September 2021, with acute, post-acute and outpatient sites of care. Age-Friendly Health Systems action communities, led by the American Hospital Association™ (AHA) and [Institute of Healthcare Improvement](#) (IHI), test the [4Ms Framework](#) in hospital and ambulatory settings, sharing learnings in a seven-month virtual community. This [blog post](#) describes how Grady Health used their experience in a previous Age-Friendly Systems Action Community to address health equity and improve the care for older adults in metro Atlanta.

## Telehealth Patient Resource Available in Six New Languages

The CMS Office of Minority Health recently released the [Coverage to Care](#) (C2C) patient resource [Telehealth: What to Know for Your Family](#) in six additional languages: [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Haitian Creole](#), [Korean](#), [Russian](#), and [Vietnamese](#). The resource, which is also available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), helps patients learn about the types of care they can receive through telehealth, how to prepare for an appointment and what to expect during a telehealth visit.

## Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Use of Medications for Opioid Use Disorder

This article in HealthAffairs discusses how medications for opioid use disorder (OUD) are the gold standard for treating OUD and preventing overdose but are underutilized among people with OUD, especially people of color. Methadone, which is highly stigmatized and only available in regulated opioid treatment programs, is the primary medication for OUD available to people of color. The limitations on treatment with methadone creates substantial life challenges, and can interfere with employment and child care. Buprenorphine is less stigmatized and less regulated, but is largely unavailable to people of color.

## July is Minority Mental Health Month

The graphic features a colorful, abstract background of overlapping circles in shades of blue, green, yellow, and orange. At the top, there is a logo consisting of several overlapping rounded rectangles in various colors (blue, green, yellow, orange, brown) arranged in a cluster. To the right of the logo, the words "MINORITY MENTAL" are written in a bold, sans-serif font, with "MINORITY" in blue and "MENTAL" in dark blue. Below this, the words "Health Month" are written in a smaller, dark blue font.

**African American & Hispanic Americans** used mental health services at about 1/2 the rate of **White Americans** in the past year and **Asian American** at about 1/3 the rate.

[counseling.org](http://counseling.org)

From the American Counseling Association website

#BIPOCMentalHealth

## Federal Programs Available to Provide Assistance during COVID-19

The [Administration for Community Living](#) recently distributed information on these federal programs available to provide assistance to those in need. Some are longstanding programs, while others were formed in response to the pandemic.



[\*\*The Emergency Broadband Benefit \(EBB\)\*\*](#) is a temporary Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program to help families and households struggling to afford internet service during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing discounts on internet service and devices.



[\*\*The Emergency Rental Assistance \(ERA\)\*\*](#) program from the Department of the Treasury assists families that are unable to pay rent or utilities so they can remain in their homes during the pandemic.



[\*\*The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\)\*\*](#) from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) provides federally funded assistance to cover home energy bills, energy crises, weatherization, and energy-related minor home repairs to eligible households.



[\*\*The Low Income Household Water Assistance Program \(LIHWAP\)\*\*](#) from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is a new emergency program that provides funds to low-income households for water and wastewater bills, helps avoid water shut offs, and supports water system reconnections caused by missed payments during the pandemic.



[\*\*The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)\*\*](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides monthly benefits that help families purchase healthy food from authorized retail food stores.

## Health Equity Webinar/Event Materials

### Association of Clinicians for the Underserved

#### *Clinician Perspectives on Racism in the Healthcare Workforce*

The field of medicine has a torrid history of racism that continues to shape the experiences of patients and providers today. Among the many ways that racism manifests itself in healthcare is through the lack of representation in our healthcare workforce and in patient engagement and satisfaction surveys where patients continue to report better care when they see providers who share their racial and ethnic identities. In this webinar, four panelists discussed their perspectives on racism in medicine, how it shapes provider and patient experiences, and strategies to build a more anti-racist, equitable, and inclusive healthcare system.

- [Recording](#)

### Commonwealth Fund / Robert Wood Johnson Foundation / PCORI

#### *National Health Equity Summit*

The virtual National Health Equity Summit was a four-day event from June 7 – 10, 2021. It was marketed as the leading national forum on practical case studies and solutions for advancing health equity.

An archive of all the presentations is available for six month and can be accessed at the Summit [homepage](#). Free registration is required. If you previously registered and attended the event, reenter your username and password to access the archives.

### HHS COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force

#### *Long COVID, PPE, Testing and Therapeutics Subcommittee Interim Recommendations*

This meeting discussed interim Task Force recommendations addressing the inequities and the impact of long-COVID, or Post-Acute Sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 infection (PASC), and the access to personal protection equipment, testing, and therapeutics that are related to this pandemic.

- [Agenda](#)
- [Slides](#)

### National Resource Center for Engaging Older Adults

#### *Serving LGBTQ Older Adults: Innovative Approaches to Help LGBTQ Older Adults Engage*

This webinar focused on social engagement among LGBTQ older adults. Presenters from SAGE (Advocacy and Services for LGBT Elders) highlighted social isolation in the LGBTQ community and some of SAGE's efforts to address it. AgeOptions and Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley and North Shore discussed programs and services they offer geared toward LGBTQ older adults and how other organizations can develop similar opportunities in their community to help LGBTQ older adults stay engaged and connected.

- [Slides](#)
- [Recording](#)

## Upcoming Events

### **Collaborating to Support Individuals with Complex Health and Social Needs**

*American Hospital Association*

**Dates:** July 14, 2021

**Time:** 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM EDT

[\*\*REGISTER HERE\*\*](#)

### **The Role of Social Determinants of Health in Value-Based Payment Models: A Rural Perspective**

*National Rural Health Resource Center*

**Date:** July 22, 2021

**Time:** 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM EDT

[\*\*REGISTER HERE\*\*](#)

### **COVID-19 Updates for Primary Care Clinicians: Improving Prevention and Treatment for Rural and Underserved Communities**

*Rural Medical Education Collaborative*

**Date:** July 24, 2021

**Time:** 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

[\*\*REGISTER HERE\*\*](#)

### **Health Disparities: The Core Paradox**

*The Cross Cultural Health Care Program*

**Date:** July 28, 2021

**Time:** 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM EDT

[\*\*REGISTER HERE\*\*](#)

### **2021 National Hispanic Latino Behavioral Health Conference**

*National Hispanic & Latino Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network*

**Dates:** September 16 – 17, 2021

[\*\*MORE INFORMATION\*\*](#)

## IPRO Upcoming Events

### ***Nuts & Bolts of Quality Improvement for Nursing Homes: Getting to the Root Cause***

The IPRO QIN-QIO is hosting a [\*\*3-part education series\*\*](#) on quality improvement strategies for nursing homes. Join IPRO for the second webinar in the series, which will identify the root cause of common nursing home concerns.

**Date:** July 28, 2021

**Time:** 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

[\*\*REGISTER HERE\*\*](#)

### ***Opioid and Pain Management Best Practices***

An important focus of IPRO's work is spreading strategies for implementing opioid and pain management best practices. Both naloxone and medications for opioid use disorder, such as buprenorphine, are proven to save the lives of opioid users. This webinar will share an overview of the Opioid and Pain Management Best Practices Assessment and how the results are used to identify improvement opportunities.

**Date:** September 22, 2021

**Time:** 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM EDT

[\*\*REGISTER HERE\*\*](#)

## IPRO Event Materials

### ***Nursing Home Naloxone Best Practices***

Naloxone is an essential drug that reverses respiratory depression caused by opioid overdose. Having naloxone readily available in nursing homes is an opioid harm reduction best practice that can save lives.

[\*\*VIEW SLIDES & RECORD HERE\*\*](#)

## Monthly Observances

July, 2021

[Minority Mental Health Awareness Month](#)

[Healthy Vision Month](#)

[Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month](#)

[Sarcoma Awareness Month](#)

[UV Safety Month](#)

[American with Disabilities Act 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary](#) (July 26)

[World Hepatitis Day](#) (July 28)

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August, 2021

[Children's Eye Health and Safety Month](#)

[Gastroparesis Awareness Month](#)

[Immunization Awareness Month](#)

[Medic Alert Awareness Month](#)

[Minority Donor Awareness Month](#)

[National Night Out](#) (August 3)

[National Health Center Week](#) (August 8 - 14)

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