

HEALTH EQUITY UPDATES

November 2023



CMS Physician Payment Rule Advances Health Equity

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is finalizing policies and payment rules to advance health equity as part of the 2024 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) final rule. In summary, CMS is finalizing payment and coding for new services to improve care for underserved populations. This includes:

- addressing unmet social needs that affect optimal health care, such as paying for caregiver training services to ensure practitioner reimbursement for engaging caregivers;
- payment for principal illness navigation services to help patients and their families navigate cancer treatment and treatment for other serious illnesses;
- finalizing separate coding and payment for community health integration services including person-centered planning, health system coordination, promoting patient self-advocacy, and facilitating access to community-based resources.

You can access details on the new rule [HERE](#).

Best of CLAS

- *A tip for implementing culturally and linguistically appropriate services.*

HHS National CLAS Standards – [Standard 7](#)

Ensure the Competence of Individuals Providing Language Assistance

Before one can be considered qualified to interpret, translate, or provide other communication assistance, he/she must be assessed to determine his/her competence, including identified requisite skills and qualifications of interpreters as outlined for this Standard.

This Month

[Native American Heritage Month](#)

Each November, we honor the diverse culture, heritage, traditions, and history of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) and highlight the health disparities experienced by this population.

- AI/AN individuals have the [lowest life expectancy](#) compared with other ethnic and racial groups.
- AI/AN individuals have the [highest uninsured rate](#) compared to other populations.
- [Social determinants of health](#) prevent access to high quality health care for this population.

The [Health and Human Services \(HHS\) Office of Minority Health](#) has resources, events, and information about Native American Heritage Month.

[National Diabetes Month](#)

#DiabetesMonth!

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases has a [webpage](#) for resources and tips on managing diabetes. The American Diabetes Association has a [campaign](#) promoting diabetes awareness and [resources](#) on disparities and social drivers of health.

In the News

[CMS Expands Access to Behavioral Health Care](#)

CMS announced earlier this month that it is expanding access to behavioral health services for people with Medicare through coverage of intensive outpatient services for mental health conditions and substance use disorders. The agency is establishing payment and program requirements for the services across various care settings, including hospital outpatient departments, Community Mental Health Centers, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and Rural Health Clinics, effective January 1, 2024. CMS is further extending coverage for intensive outpatient services in Opioid Treatment Programs.

[Respectful Care Can Support Healthy Pregnancies](#)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), maternal death rates among women of color have nearly doubled from 17.4 per 100,000 births in 2018 to 32.9. per 100,000 births in 2021. Women of color, especially Black women, are more likely to report discrimination, subpar care, and negative interactions with providers. As a result, women of color are less likely to ask providers questions or express concerns about their pregnancy and overall health. Study authors recommend that healthcare systems implement training for health care providers on unconscious bias, shared decision-making and cultural awareness.

[PAC Health Equity Confidential Feedback Reports](#)

Last month, CMS released confidential reports for post-acute care (PAC) providers in the Home Health, Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility, Long-Term Care Hospital, and Skilled Nursing Facility settings: the Discharge to Community (DTC) Health Equity Confidential Feedback Report and the Medicare Spending Per Beneficiary (MSPB) Health Equity Confidential Feedback Report. The goal of the reports is to compare measure outcomes between Fee-for-Service Medicare-Medicaid dually enrolled patients (duals) and non-duals, as well as between Non-White and White patients. The reports can be accessed through the Internet Quality Improvement & Evaluation System (iQIES) reports folders.

[HHS Offers Funding to Lower Home Energy Costs](#)

HHS released nearly \$3.7 billion in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding to help households with their home energy costs. The funding aims to ensure U.S households have the support they need to maintain safe and healthy indoor temperatures while still being able to afford other essentials such as food, medicine, and housing. A [LIHEAP eligibility tool](#) allows U.S. households to quickly identify if they might be eligible for LIHEAP assistance by inputting basic information, e.g., income and household size.



Visit the IPRO Resource Library: <https://qi-library.ipro.org/>

Upcoming Events

[Health-Related Social Needs Affinity Group](#)

IPRO

Dates: The second Wednesday of the month, September – February.

Time: 12:00 – 12:45 PM ET

[Behavioral Health Integration Webinar Series: Nuts and Bolts of Delivering Effective Cultural Programs in Integrated Care Clinics](#)

Indian Health Services

Date: November 30, 2023

Time: 12:00 – 1:00 PM ET

[Social Determinants of Health Policy Forum](#)

Aligning for Health

Dates: December 4-6, 2023

In Washington, D.C.

[Agenda](#)