



## CMS Snapshot

### February 22-29, 2024

Delivered to you by the Partner Relations Group in the Office of Communications

All releases below are from 2pm Thursday, February 22 through 2pm Thursday, February 29, 2024.

#### News Releases

\*February 23- [CMS Roundup \(Feb. 23, 2024\)](#). Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) provides an at-a-glance summary of news from around the agency.

\*February 23- [HHS Crisis Resources for Oklahoma](#). In response to the death of Nex Benedict, a non-binary/two-spirit student in Owasso, Oklahoma, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has compiled resources related to mental health and youth crisis services, tools for youth-serving providers, and resources to preventing school-based bullying and violence. HHS stands in solidarity with the LGBTQI+ community and reaffirms its commitment to addressing discrimination, bullying, and violence in all its forms.

\*February 23- [HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra Tours New England, Announces \\$100 Million Investment in Women's Healthcare Alongside the First Lady](#). *Secretary Visits New Hampshire to Highlight Biden-Harris Administration's Efforts to Lower Prescription Drug Costs*. This week, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra toured New England to highlight how President Biden's agenda is delivering for communities across the country. The Secretary joined First Lady Jill Biden in Boston to announce \$100 million investment in women's health research, toured Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire to highlight lowering health care costs, sat down with the Wall Street Journal for their annual Health Forum, and spoke with students at Harvard Kennedy School's Institute of Politics.

\*February 26- [Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Funding to Increase Capacity for Behavioral Health Services](#). *SAMSHA Announces \$36.9 Million in Behavioral Health Funding Opportunities CMS Issues Guidance Expanding the Availability of Enhanced Medicaid Funding for Behavioral Health Care Providers*. Today, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), announced \$36.9 million in notices of funding opportunities for grant programs supporting behavioral health services across the country. Additionally, HHS, through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), issued guidance that allows states to expand the pool of behavioral health care providers eligible for enhanced federal Medicaid funding, which will

better support this critical workforce as well as improve access to care. The guidance also allows states to claim federal dollars for nurse advice lines.

\*February 27- [HHS Office on Women's Health Announces Final Phase Winners in Challenge to Address Breastfeeding Disparities](#). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women's Health (OWH) has awarded prizes to the winners in the final phase of the [Reducing Disparities in Breastfeeding Innovation Challenge](#). The national competition was created to identify and reward programs that increase breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates – and decrease disparities – among breastfeeding mothers in the United States. To ensure infants receive the short- and long-term benefits of breastmilk, the [U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) recommends breastfeeding exclusively for the first 6 months.

\*February 27- [HHS Announces a Multi-Pronged Effort to Strengthen Direct Care Workforce](#). *DCW Strategies Center offers technical assistance opportunities and online resource hub*. Today, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Administration for Community Living (ACL), announced several new initiatives and resources from ACL's Direct Care Workforce (DCW) Strategies Center to address the dire shortage of professionals who provide the services many older adults and people with disabilities need to live in the community. These include two technical assistance opportunities to help states strengthen their systems for recruiting, retaining, and developing direct care workers; a national hub to connect states, stakeholders and communities to best practices and other resources related to the direct care workforce; and a webinar series for states and stakeholders focused on a range of direct care workforce topics.

\*February 28- [Readout of HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra's Meeting with Director-General of the World Health Organization](#). On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Xavier Becerra spoke with Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus regarding the current pandemic accord negotiations. During the call, the Secretary stressed the importance of establishing a global agreement that would make America and the world better prepared in the future, and they agreed to continue working together to find common ground.

\*February 29- [CMS Statement on Current Status of Blood Tests for Organ Transplant Rejection](#). Statement: Patients with transplanted hearts, lungs, or kidneys who meet Medicare's local coverage criteria can continue to access blood tests used to monitor for organ transplantation when ordered by their doctors. In March 2023, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS), through its local contractors (known as Medicare Administrative Contractors or MACs) issued revised [billing instructions](#) for these tests in response to improper billing and overutilization. Billing instructions help health care providers understand when and how to bill Medicare for a covered service. Today, the MACs updated these instructions to clarify that these tests remain available to patients when medically necessary and ordered by a physician.

\*February 29- [Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Rule to Reduce Costs for More than 100,000 Families Receiving Child Care Subsidies](#). Today, the Biden-Harris Administration's U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), announced a new rule that will reduce costs for families that receive child care subsidies and improve options for families. This final rule delivers on the Executive Order on Increasing Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers, signed by President Biden in April 2023, which directed HHS to reduce child care costs and improve child care payment practices.