



CMS Snapshot

October 14-21, 2021

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

All releases below are from 2pm Thursday, October 14 through 2pm Thursday, October 21, 2021.

News Releases

*October 14- [HHS Announces Availability of \\$100 Million for State Loan Repayment Programs to Support Primary Health Care Workforce in Underserved Communities](#). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is announcing the availability of \$100 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding for state-run programs that support, recruit, and retain primary care clinicians who live and work in underserved communities. This funding represents a five-fold increase to the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) [State Loan Repayment Program](#) (SLRP), and helps improve health equity by ensuring that clinicians working in high-need communities remain in them.

*October 15- [Medicare Open Enrollment Period Kicks Off Today](#). Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is reminding people with Medicare that Medicare Open Enrollment begins October 15, 2021, and now is the time to review their coverage options and make a choice that meets their health care needs. Medicare's Open Enrollment period gives those who rely on Medicare the opportunity to make changes to their health plans or prescription drug plans, pick a Medicare Advantage Plan, or return to Original Medicare.

*October 15- [Biden-Harris Administration Increases HealthCare.Gov Call Center Pay Rate to \\$15/Hr](#). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) increased hourly wages to a minimum of \$15 per hour for contract employees in all of the Medicare and Federal Health Insurance Marketplace (HealthCare.gov) call center locations effective September 26, 2021. This pay rate increase will impact up to 12,000 call center staff, help CMS attract and retain top talent ahead of the upcoming Open Enrollment periods and ensure high levels of customer service are delivered.

*October 19- [Statements by Officials of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Commemorating the First Openly Transgender Four-Star Officer and First Female Four-Star Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps on October 19, 2021](#). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) publicly announced today the nation's first

openly transgender four-star officer across any of the eight uniformed services of the United States. Admiral Rachel Levine, who serves as the HHS Assistant Secretary for Health and head of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps, was ceremonially sworn in as a four-star admiral. Admiral Levine now serves as the highest ranking official in the USPHS Commissioned Corps and its first-ever female four-star admiral. Admiral Levine will lead 6,000 Public Health Service officers who are dedicated to serving our nation's most underserved and vulnerable populations.


*October 21- [“Medicare & You” Handbook Now Available in Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese](#). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced today that the “Medicare & You” handbook is now available in Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese. The handbook is being released as part of this year’s Medicare Open Enrollment Period, which kicked off on October 15, 2021, and ends on December 7, 2021, and provides essential information on enrollment, program benefits, coverage options, and rights. Asian Americans currently represent the fourth largest demographic enrolled in Medicare. Today’s action will provide many of these consumers – along with many who have not yet enrolled – crucial assistance in their preferred languages.

*October 21- [CMS Launches Webpage to Share Innovative State Actions to Expand Medicaid Home and Community-based Services](#). Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) launched a new “one-stop shop” for state Medicaid agencies and stakeholders on Medicaid.gov to advance transparency and innovation for home and community-based services. Home and community-based services allow people enrolled in Medicaid to receive services and supports in a preferred setting outside of an institution, such as in their own home. Through this new webpage, state Medicaid agencies and stakeholders can access information about states’ plans to enhance, expand, and strengthen home and community-based services across the country using new Medicaid funding made available by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP).

Blogs

*October 15- [It’s time to shop & compare plans for 2022](#). Medicare’s Open Enrollment is now – December 7. Review your Medicare health and drug coverage and compare it with other plans that may better meet your needs.

*October 15- [Boost your protection from COVID-19](#). If you got the Pfizer vaccine, get ready to help increase your protection with a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot. Medicare covers a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine booster shot at no cost to you if you’re 65 and older OR for certain people at high risk, at least 6 months after you complete your second dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine series. (Note: Don’t mix vaccines. Your third dose should be the Pfizer vaccine if your first two doses were Pfizer.)

*October 20- [LymeX Exemplifies the Power of Partnerships after One Year of Progress](#). One year ago, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation launched the \$25-million-dollar [LymeX Innovation Accelerator](#) (LymeX) partnership. As this historic partnership celebrates accomplishments with a [LymeX First Anniversary video](#) , let's see how LymeX is carrying momentum forward.

CMS has developed a [Virtual Toolkit](#) to help you stay informed on CMS and HHS materials available on the COVID-19. Please share these materials, bookmark the page, and check back often for the most up-to-date information. For more information, please email partnership@cms.hhs.gov