



## News from Congress:

**Nov. 8, 2019**—The House Health Subcommittee marked up and voted out several maternal and child health (MCH) bills. Legislation included: [H.R. 4996-Helping MOMS Act](#), [H.R. 4995-Maternal Health Quality Improvement Act](#), [H.R. 4215-Excellence in Maternal Health Act](#), and [H.R. 4243-Rural MOMS Act](#). Overall themes included ways to provide states with more flexibility and resources to make and enhance a variety of MCH services.

**Dec. 3, 2019**—The U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, in a bipartisan vote, [approved Dr. Stephen Hahn as the new Federal Drug Administration](#) (FDA) Commissioner.

**Dec. 8, 2019**—Senate HELP Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and House Energy and Commerce leadership announced an [agreement on bipartisan, bicameral legislation addressing health care costs](#). The legislation would end surprise medical billing by creating a new system of dispute resolution including arbitration. It would also provide \$20 billion over five years for community health centers and addresses the rising cost of prescription drugs among other provisions.

**Dec. 12, 2019**—The House passed H.R. 3—[Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act](#). The language of the final text was negotiated for months by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democratic caucus leaders. The bill looks to negotiate prescription drug pricing in a number of ways

including: allowing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to directly negotiate the prices of the most expensive drugs and requiring HHS to negotiate the prices of drugs and biological products lacking competition from generics or biosimilars; capping prices of drugs at 1.2 times the average price of several countries; and requiring drug manufacturers to pay rebates to Medicare for drugs with price increases exceeding inflation among other measures.

**Dec. 17, 2019**—The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on "[Tacking the Opioid Crisis: A Whole-of-Government Approach.](#)"

## From the Administration:

**November 2019**—The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) released an updated [Strategic Plan](#), including ways to renew its message in cooperating with its many partners to deliver health care to those most in need.

**November 2019**—A proposed rule was posted that if finalized, would allow the [importation of certain drugs from abroad](#) under certain circumstances. The conversation on prescription drug importation has [been ongoing](#) for the administration, and under the proposed rule pharmacists and wholesalers would be allowed to import prescription drugs from Canada into the U.S. under specific safety and cost savings conditions.

**Nov. 7, 2019**—The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) released a new webpage

called [www.findtreatment.gov](http://www.findtreatment.gov) to connect those looking for substance use treatment with over 13,000 treatment providers across the country.

**Nov. 7, 2019**—HHS announced they were suing Gilead for [patent infringement](#) after the prescription drug manufacturer refused to obtain licenses for HHS patents on an HIV medication known as PreP regimen. The suit was filed in federal court in Delaware.

**Nov. 21, 2019**—This was [National Rural Health Day](#). The day was created to increase awareness of rural health-related issues and challenges and to recognize those working to help those living in American rural communities. HRSA hosted a weeklong series of [events](#) to honor the day.

**December 2019**—The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released its biannual report on, "[School Health Profiles Report](#)." The report includes state specific information and informational 50-state maps with the 2018 data.

**December 2019**—HHS's Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) released its 2018 [Annual RWHAP Client-Level Data Report](#).

**Dec. 1, 2019**—Was [World AIDS Day](#). The first World AIDS Day started in 1988 to annually assemble organizations across the world to bring awareness to HIV/AIDS and efforts to address the issue.

**Dec. 2, 2019**—HHS announced its new initiative to end new HIV/AIDS infections called, [Ready, Set, PreP](#). This initiative will provide the HIV/AIDS prevention drug, PreP, to 200,000 patients without cost who qualify for the program.

**Dec. 3, 2019**—Spending for people enrolled in traditional Medicare is expected [to increase by 4.5%](#) in 2021. The information was outlined in a memo sent out by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS). These types of estimates can also be revised to go higher once final rates are released in April.

**Dec. 4, 2019**—The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a new [final rule](#) that revises the conditions under which the administration would accept state waivers on time limits for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) in areas that have an unemployment rate over 10% or lack sufficient jobs.

This rule would eliminate unlimited carryover of ABAWD discretionary exemptions, instituting a one-year limit. For waivers, the effective date is April 1, 2020, and Oct. 1, 2020, for discretionary exemptions. States will also need to screen ABAWDs for fitness to work, track enrollees and provide access to all available federal, state and local work and workfare programs. [Read a full press release and additional resources](#). Stay tuned for an NCSL webinar to understand state impacts of the new rule.

**Dec. 11, 2019**—The FDA posted a [warning letter](#) to the drug company Alkermes, Inc. of Massachusetts, the manufacture of the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) drug vivitrol. In the letter the FDA write that Alkermes hasn't included the side effects of an increased risk of opioid overdose, which can be fatal.

## From the Courts:

**Dec.13, 2019**—HHS is appealing a lower court's [decision](#) that threw out a rule that would have lowered how much Medicare would spend for off-campus clinical care.

## Funding Announcements:

**December 2019**—The Administration of Community Living (ACL) is currently accepting applications for the [2020 Empower Communitates to Address Behavioral Health and Chronic Pain through Chronic Disease Self-Management Education Programs](#). Applications are due by Jan. 29, 2020.

**December 2019**—ACL is currently accepting applications for the [2020 Empowering Communities to Reduce Falls and Falls Risk](#) program. Applications are due by Jan. 31, 2020.

**December 2019**—HRSA published the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the FY 2020 [Black Lung Clinics Program](#). Applications are due by March 6, 2020.

**December 2019**—SAMHSA announced a funding opportunity for the [Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness](#). Applications are due Jan. 24, 2020.

**December 2019**—The National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced a funding opportunity for the [Implementation and Sustaining Evidence-Based Mental Health Practices in Low-Resources Settings to Achieve Equity in Outcomes](#). Applications are due Feb. 24, 2020.

**December 2019**—The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists has announced a [funding opportunity](#) for neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) surveillance. This funding will provide a mechanism for state, local, tribal, and territorial public health organizations or agencies with public health authority to conduct population health surveillance while leveraging existing surveillance infrastructure. The deadline to apply is Jan. 21, 2020.

## Spotlight On:

**Dec. 10-12, 2019**—NCSL hosted a successful [2019 Capitol Forum](#) in Phoenix. Resources from the presentations can be found [here](#).

**Dec. 13, 2019**—NCSL updated its [Family First Updates and New Legislation](#) webpage that tracks updates on the federal law as well as enacted state legislation related to the federal law.

**For more information on NCSL's Health and Human Services Standing Committee State-Federal Affairs activities, please visit [our website](#), or email Haley Nicholson, [haley.nicholson@ncsl.org](mailto:haley.nicholson@ncsl.org) or Margaret Wile, [margaret.wile@ncsl.org](mailto:margaret.wile@ncsl.org).**