



HHS Fact Sheet

Advancing Health Equity for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities

This Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AA and NHPI) Heritage Month, HHS is highlighting some of its efforts to enhance AA and NHPI health and wellbeing by improving health outcomes, lowering health care costs, expanding access to health care, and strengthening supports for children and families.

Every day, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) works to ensure that individuals, families, and communities — including those from AA and NHPI communities — can go to sleep at night with the peace of mind that comes with having access to quality, affordable health care and other forms of care.

During AA and NHPI Heritage Month, HHS celebrates the progress it has made to advance health and wellbeing in AA and NHPI communities and recommits to building on this progress in order to deliver on the promise of health equity for communities that are underserved and under-resourced.

LOWERING HEALTH CARE COSTS

Thanks to President Biden's lower cost prescription drug law — the Inflation Reduction Act — AA and NHPs enrolled in Medicare are saving money on their prescription drugs.

- **Capping the cost of insulin to \$35 a month and making recommended preventative vaccines free of charge:** The President's Inflation Reduction Act is already saving Medicare enrollees money now, including the estimated 2.1 million AA and NHPs enrolled in the Part D program, by capping the out-of-pocket cost of a monthly supply of each covered insulin product at \$35 a month and offering recommended preventative vaccines free of charge under Medicare Part D. In 2020, about 31,000 AA and NHPI enrollees would have benefited from the law's \$35 insulin cap and in 2021, about 159,000 enrollees would not have had any out-of-pocket costs for recommended Part D covered adult vaccines. Under the Inflation Reduction Act's Part D redesign, about 33,800 AA and NHPI Medicare enrollees who do not receive financial assistance are projected to save \$1,000 or more in 2025.

➤ **Negotiating the price of prescription drugs:** Medicare is now able to negotiate the price of some of the costliest prescription drugs covered under Medicare Part D, which is the prescription drug plan for 2.1 million AA and NHPIs. HHS, through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), last year announced the first ten drugs covered under Medicare Part D selected for negotiations, and all ten drug companies decided to participate in negotiations. Medicare enrollees paid a total of \$3.4 billion in out-of-pocket costs in 2022 for these drugs. These drugs treat serious conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, stroke, some types of cancer and heart failure. AA and NHPIs disproportionately have these conditions and are often more likely to develop and die from them than their white counterparts. They also report greater difficulty accessing prescription drugs.

- In 2024, under the President's lower cost prescription drug law, expansion of low-income subsidy (LIS) eligibility goes into effect, which could result in a reduction of about \$300 in average annual out-of-pocket costs for eligible enrollees from all racial and ethnic groups. In 2021, about 8,400 AA and NHPI Medicare enrollees received partial LIS benefits. This provision will expand full LIS benefits to these individuals and others who meet the eligibility criteria for LIS.

RECORD EXPANSION OF HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

A historic 21.3 million Americans have selected an Affordable Care Act Insurance Marketplace plan during the 2024 Open Enrollment period, more than any time in history.

- **Quality Affordable Health Care:** HHS has continued its commitment to making health insurance available and affordable to everyone, including AA and NHPI communities. Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act and the American Rescue Plan, 4 out of 5 people can find coverage for \$10/month or less. Between 2020 and 2023, the number of AA and NHPI enrollees increased by 14 percent.
- **Reaching AA and NHPI Communities:** For this past enrollment cycle, the Administration issued almost \$100 million in Navigator Awards, allowing organizations to hire staff who are trained to help consumers find affordable, comprehensive health coverage. Navigators, as they are known, have been key to reaching consumers where they are, and helping them enroll in quality health insurance plans in every Marketplace state. Data disaggregated by race for the 2024 Open Enrollment shows that once again AA and NHPI enrollment increased from previous years. Comparing 2020 to 2023, the number of AI/AN enrollees increased from 52,000 to 82,000 (a 59 percent increase), AA and NHPI enrollees increased from 0.8 million in 2020 to just over 0.9 million in 2023 (a 14 percent increase).

IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES

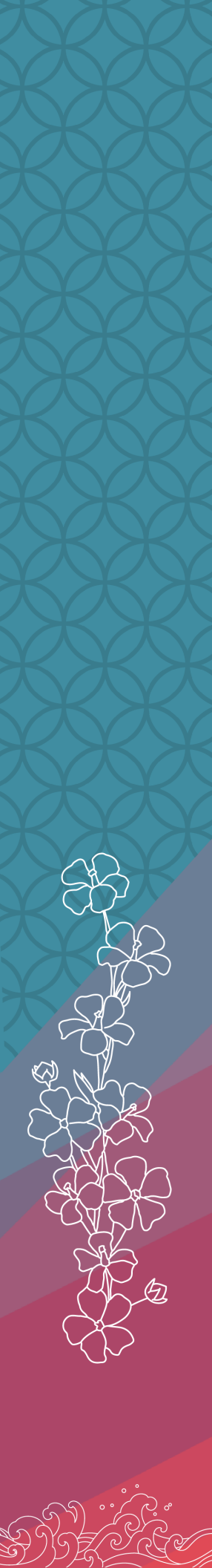
HHS is committed to addressing health disparities in AA and NHPI communities and advancing health equity.

➤ **Increasing Language Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency:**

Effective communication is crucial in health care and human services, where miscommunication may lead to misdiagnosis, improper or delayed medical treatment, barriers to necessary services and programs, and return visits to emergency departments. HHS's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) led efforts to develop the HHS Language Access Plan, which sets forth practical guidance, best practices, and action steps for the agency to increase language access. Many offices and divisions are already taking important steps to make their materials available to people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), including Native Hawaiian and Pacific indigenous languages. For example, CMS has reinstated requirements that Medicare Advantage (MA) and Part D plans include a multi-language insert to inform beneficiaries of the availability of free language and translation services and that MA plan provider directories include a provider's cultural and linguistic capabilities.

- On April 26, 2024, HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) **published a final rule** implementing Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act. The rule will require covered health insurance issuers, health programs or activities, and Health Insurance Marketplaces to provide language assistance services to patients free of charge. The final rule adopts long standing interpretation of civil rights laws by requiring recipients of Federal financial assistance to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to covered health programs or activities for each individual with limited English proficiency (LEP). Covered entities are required to provide notice that language assistance services will be provided free of charge to comply with this rule. Those covered entities must also adopt language access procedures describing their process for providing language assistance services to individuals with LEP when required. Access to these services helps protect the privacy and the independent decision-making of patients and, importantly, unburdens minor children of the responsibility of serving as interpreters for their parent or grandparent at the doctor.
- HHS OCR has translated its OCR complaint portal into 15 languages including, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Japanese.

➤ **Strengthening Nondiscrimination in Health Care:** Ensuring equal access to health care is a priority of the Biden-Harris Administration. HHS, through the Office for Civil Rights, finalized a rule to implement Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (Section 1557), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, and disability in certain health programs and activities. This rule restores and strengthens civil rights protections for patients in certain federally funded health programs and activities and HHS programs after the 2020 version of the rule limited its scope to cover fewer programs and services.



➤ **Supporting the People of Hawai‘i After the Maui Wildfires:** Following the 2023 Maui wildfires in Hawai‘i, Secretary Xavier Becerra declared a **public health emergency** to give health care providers and suppliers greater flexibility in meeting emergency health needs of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries.

- The Secretary also **visited those impacted** to offer HHS support in recovery efforts in a way that respects sacred lands, cultures, and traditions of the diverse population in Hawai‘i. Specifically, spotlighting the needs of Native Hawaiians and the significance of Lāhainā — and how recovery efforts are being carried out in a culturally sensitive and community-centered way.
- To that effort, HHS, through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), coordinated an agency wide response to wildfire recovery to ensure impacted communities received uninterrupted access to human services. Led by the Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response and Office of Regional Operations, ACF provided disaster human services expertise to grant recipients, partners, and stakeholders during preparedness, response, and recovery operations and built the capacity of human and social service partners to support communities during these events, including ensuring they provide culturally appropriate services and promote HHS-operated hotlines. Additionally, ACF assessed grant-funded facilities damaged, destroyed, displaced, or rendered inoperable due to the wildfires and coordinated with the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services on emergency flexibilities available through ACF programs to complement and augment emergency sheltering and immediate needs assistance.

➤ **Supporting AA and NHPI Mental Health:** According to federal data, in 2020, **suicide** was the leading cause of death among Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, ages 10 to 19, and the second leading cause of death among those ages 20-34. Meanwhile, AA and NHPIs are some of the least likely communities to seek mental health treatment due to longstanding barriers — including cultural stigma, the lack of culturally competent care providers, and language barriers. With the rise of anti-Asian hate and gun violence targeting the AA and NHPI communities, AA and NHPIs have been deeply impacted by mental health challenges. The task of expanding access to quality and culturally competent mental health services for AA and NHPI communities has only grown more urgent.

- The White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) hosted an **in-person summit** focused on improving equity and access to behavioral health care for AA and NHPI communities. Panels and facilitated discussions focused on key topics that impact mental health, including: anti-Asian hate, national 988 suicide prevention & crisis line and engagement of AA and NHPI communities, language access, integrated care, and workforce issues.

- The national 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available to provide immediate crisis counseling with trained counselors who can help people experiencing suicidal, substance use, and/or mental health crisis or any other kind of emotional distress. The service is available 24/7, free, and can be accessed through phone, text and chat. Additionally, 988 has LGBTQI+ adult and youth, deaf and heard-of-hearing, and Spanish language-trained counselors available to answer calls, texts and chats. People who speak other languages should call 988 and Language Line Solutions will provide interpreters in more than 240 additional languages.
- Last year, HHS, through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, announced that it had awarded **nearly \$130 million** to expand Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) across the Country, including a number that provide culturally specific services to AA and NHPIs. CCBHCs must serve anyone who requests care for mental health or substance use conditions, regardless of their ability to pay, place of residence, or age. People being served by CCBHCs experience less homelessness, less illegal substance use, and reduced use of jails, prisons, emergency rooms and hospitals for behavioral health issues.

➤ **Driving equity, justice and opportunity for AA and NHPI communities:**

On May 28, 2021, President Joe Biden signed Executive Order 14031, “Advancing Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders” to establish the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI) and deliver on his commitment to reinstate and reinvigorate this historic Initiative. Housed at the Department of Health and Human Services and co-chaired by Secretary Xavier Becerra and U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai, WHIAANHPI and the President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders will celebrate their 25th year anniversary in June and continue to drive an ambitious, whole-of-government agenda to advance equity, justice, and opportunity for AA and NHPI communities.

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