



HHS Fact Sheet: Advancing Health Equity for Hispanics



This Hispanic Heritage Month, HHS is highlighting its efforts to enhance Hispanic health and wellbeing by expanding access to health and behavioral health care and lowering health care costs.

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

During National Hispanic Heritage Month, HHS celebrates the progress it has made to advance health and wellbeing in Hispanic 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 FOR HISPANICS

Lowering the Cost of Some of the Costliest Drugs

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

🔗 **Capping the cost of insulin to \$35 a month and making recommended preventive vaccines free of charge:** The President's Inflation Reduction Act is already saving Medicare enrollees money now, including the estimated 5 million Hispanics enrolled in the Part D program, by capping the cost of a monthly supply of each covered insulin at \$35 a month and offering recommended preventive vaccines free of charge.

- Under Medicare Part B and Part D, about 131,000 Hispanic Medicare enrollees would have benefited from the insulin cap if it had been in effect in 2020.
- Among the 3.4 million enrollees who received a vaccine under Medicare Part D in 2021, nearly 245,000 were Hispanic enrollees and they paid a total of \$7.9 million in out-of-pocket costs for Part D covered vaccines. These enrollees would have had no out-of-pocket costs for adult recommended vaccines covered under Part D under the IRA vaccine provision if it had been in effect in 2021.

🔗 **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 5 million Hispanics. HHS, through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), recently announced the first 10 drugs covered under Medicare Part D selected for negotiation. The negotiations with participating drug companies will occur in 2023 and 2024, and any negotiated prices will become effective beginning in 2026. Medicare enrollees taking the 10 drugs covered under Part D selected for negotiation paid a total of \$3.4 billion in out-of-pocket costs in 2022 for these drugs. About 10% of Medicare Part D enrollees are Hispanics — about 5 million people. Of the 10 drugs selected for negotiations, Hispanics made up a disproportionately higher share of enrollees taking certain medicines. For example, 16 percent of Medicare Part D Enrollees in 2022 are Hispanics taking Januvia, Hispanics



made up 14 percent of those taking Farxiga, and 13 percent of those taking Jardiance. All of these drugs treat diabetes, a condition that is more prevalent among Hispanic enrollees (37 percent) than White enrollees (24 percent). Additionally, fewer proportion of users are Hispanics for some of the other 10 drugs. For example, Hispanics made up 7 percent of enrollees taking Xarelto, and 6 percent of those taking Eliquis, which treats blood clots.

➤ **Lower premium costs for health care:** During Marketplace Open Enrollment this year, more people will qualify for help purchasing affordable high-quality health coverage. This is thanks to the historic Inflation Reduction Act, which extended enhanced subsidies that enabled 13 million Americans to save an average of \$800 on their health insurance last year and allows four out of five Healthcare.gov enrollees to find a plan for \$10 or less after subsidies.

Through increased and targeted outreach, research, and the premium tax credit enhancements in the American Rescue Plan Act, as well as the extension of these enhancements in the Inflation Reduction Act, the Biden-Harris administration has expanded coverage for Hispanics extensively.

For example, among states using the Federal Marketplace platform, the number of Hispanic enrollees grew from 1.7 million to 2.6 million between 2020 and 2022, which is a 53 percent increase. Other State-Based Marketplaces saw similar increases.

Additionally, the share of Marketplace enrollees who are Hispanics increased substantially between 2018 and 2022, going from 18.1 percent in 2018 to 25.3 percent in 2022. One in four Marketplace enrollees using the [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) platform are Hispanic.

Expanding and Protecting Access to Health Care for Hispanics

➤ **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 and barriers to necessary services and programs.

HHS Office for Civil Rights, through the Language Access Steering Committee, has led efforts to increase meaningful access to language assistance services to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP).

- A great majority of HHS divisions have included provisions for in-language website, listserv, and public outreach content. A majority have also included provisions for telephonic interpreter services. These efforts are vital to ensure equal access to health care and human services programs to persons with LEP.
- OCR published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in the federal register proposing comprehensive updates to Section 1557, the nondiscrimination provision of the Affordable Care Act, which would adopt the longstanding principle that covered entities must take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to individuals with LEP. Covered entities would be required to post a notice of consumer rights, provide information about communication assistance, and post taglines in the top 15 languages spoken by individuals with LEP nationally — indicating the availability for such assistance.

➤ **Investing in the Health Care Workforce:** In July, HHS launched the HHS Workforce Initiative to support, strengthen, and grow a health workforce that is representative of the community that it serves. As part of the Initiative, HHS is leveraging programs across the Department, including through the \$2.7 billion workforce investment proposed in the President's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget for the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) workforce training, scholarship, loan repayment, and well-being programs to support the health care workforce. The Initiative is focused on federal investments to support individuals across health workforce disciplines — including physicians, nurses, dentists, behavioral health care providers, community health workers, peer support specialists and many others who dedicate their careers to improving the nation's health and wellbeing.



📌 **Actions to Keep People Covered as States Resume Medicaid, CHIP Renewals:** There were 24 million Hispanic enrollees in Medicaid and CHIP in 2020. More than half of these enrollees were Medicaid children (42%) or enrolled through CHIP (12%) showing the profound impact on coverage the Medicaid and CHIP programs provide to Hispanic youth. Additionally, 20% of adult Hispanics (ages 19-64) were covered through Medicaid Expansion in the Affordable Care Act, indicating many Hispanic adults rely on states expanding Medicaid for coverage. In June, HHS announced new flexibilities to help keep Americans covered as states resume Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) renewals. The new flexibilities were announced in a letter Secretary Becerra sent to the nation’s governors urging them to adopt all available flexibilities to minimize avoidable coverage losses among children and families. Building on flexibilities HHS offered to states well before renewals resumed, some of the new flexibilities include:

- Allowing managed care plans to assist people with Medicaid with completing their renewal forms, including completing certain parts of the renewal forms on their behalf.
- Allowing states to delay an administrative termination for one month while the state conducts additional targeted outreach. This will give people more time to be reminded to fill out and return their renewal forms.
- Allowing pharmacies and community-based organizations to facilitate reinstatement of coverage for those who were recently disenrolled for procedural reasons based on presumptive eligibility criteria.

📌 **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Adds Spanish Text and Chat Service:** In July, SAMHSA and its 988 Lifeline partners announced the addition of Spanish text and chat services. Individuals who speak Spanish can now connect directly to Spanish-speaking crisis counselors by calling 988 and pressing option 2, texting “AYUDA” to 988, or chatting online at 988lineadevida.org or 988Lifeline.org. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline received nearly 15,000 Spanish line contacts (calls, texts, and chats) between July and August 2023.

988 recently launched a Spanish text and chat campaign to build awareness of 988 services in the Hispanic community. Now individuals whose native or only language is Spanish will be able to learn about the 988 Lifeline and get the support they need. From now through December, the Hispanic community will see 988 Spanish text and chat information on social media and in their local supermarkets, pharmacies, outside of bodegas, hair and nail salons, barbershops, and laundromats, and hear about it on the radio. The campaign is expected to reach 35 million Spanish-speaking adults in the United States and Puerto Rico.

We are also working to reduce the stigma around mental health, and reaching out for support if needed, among Hispanics. Through School-based Behavioral Health Centers (SBHCs), students have a safe and confidential space to seek mental health counseling, helping alleviate the stigma associated with mental health and fostering a supportive environment. And by offering therapeutic services and interventions, these centers help students cope with stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges that may impede their educational journey.

📌 **Ensuring Diverse Clinical Trials for Long COVID Care:** In July, NIH announced the launch and opening of enrollment for the phase 2 RECOVER Long COVID Clinical Trials that will evaluate at least four potential treatments for Long COVID. The clinical trials are designed to evaluate multiple treatments simultaneously to identify more swiftly those that are effective. In addition to working to launch Long COVID clinical trials, RECOVER has been making concerted efforts to reach diverse and minority communities to take part in these clinical trials to ensure the data reflects the true diversity of this nation. This includes working with nationwide organizations like NALEO to reach the Hispanic community. This Long COVID clinical trials progress is another major milestone in the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to addressing the longer-term impacts of the worst public health crisis in a century.

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