



FAMILY VOICES[®]

Washington DC Update
October 24, 2019

Greetings from Washington!

Not a whole lot is new on the health front this week, except that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released data showing that health insurance premiums have come down and the number of health plan choices has gone up. (See the ACA section, below.) Congress marches on trying to figure out how to deal with funding the government past November 21, and how to develop legislation to lower prescription drug costs and protect consumers from surprise medical bills. This week's Update provides some new information, and repeats background information on legislation and links to various valuable resources from the last Update. (New and repeated material are marked as such.)

- **Warning (repeated):** The Social Security Administration has received reports of fraudulent phone calls from individuals impersonating Social Security employees. Callers have masked their phone numbers as the *Ticket to Work Help Line's* phone number. If you receive this fraudulent call, you may hear a recorded message that states that your benefits will end or that your Social Security Number will be suspended. The call then prompts you to "press 1" to connect to a live person. **Do not press 1. Instead, hang up.** If you suspect you have received a scam call, you should report the details of the call to the Social Security Administration's Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-269-0271 or [online](#). **The Office of the Inspector General at the Social Security Administration, offers [tips to protect yourself from scams](#).**

NOTE:

- **The 2020 Open Enrollment Period is November 1, 2019 to December 15, 2019.** See the [list of 2019 CMS Navigator grantees](#).
- [Get Ready: TRICARE Open Season, Federal Benefits Open Season Begins Nov. 11](#)
- **Medicare's Medical and Drug Open Enrollment Period is October 15 - December 7**
To find 2020 health and drug plans, compare coverage options, or estimate Medicare costs, go to www.Medicare.gov. Click [here](#) for Medicare Open Enrollment Period Outreach and Media Materials.

UPCOMING WEBINARS AND CALLS

[Prepare Now for TRICARE Open Season and Federal Benefits Open Season](#)

Thursday, October 24, 1:00-2:00 pm ET

TRICARE/Military OneSource

[Also see TRICARE event on Oct. 31, below]

[Supporting Employment for Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities: How ABLE Accounts and SSA Work Incentives Can Help](#)

Thursday, October 24, 2:00-3:15 pm ET

ABLE National Resource Center

SERIES: [Health Reform: Beyond the Basics](#)

Beyond the Basics past webinars and other resources can be found at

<https://www.healthreformbeyondthebasics.org/>

- [Working with Immigrants: What Consumer Enrollment Assistance Providers Need to Know Now](#)

Tuesday, October 29, 2:00 pm ET

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

- [Best Practices When Assisting People with Disabilities Enroll in Health Coverage](#)

Thursday, October 31, 2:00 pm ET

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

The series archive can be found at <http://www.healthreformbeyondthebasics.org/>.

[Cultural Competence: What it Means for Person-Centered Thinking, Planning, & Practice](#)

Tuesday, October 29, 3:00-4:30 pm ET

National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems

[Social Determinants of Health, Social Risk Factors, and Social Needs: Defining Interventions and Partnership Opportunities](#)

Wednesday, October 30, 3:00-4:00 pm ET

Health Care Transformation Task Force

TRICARE SITREP

Thursday, October 31, 3:15–4:15 pm ET [intro video and question posting at 3:00]

TRICARE

The TRICARE SITREP is a live Q&A session hosted on the TRICARE Facebook page. Here's how it works:

- Go to [facebook/TRICARE](https://www.facebook.com/TRICARE) on Oct. 31.
- We'll post an introductory video at 3 p.m. announcing that we're about to begin.
- Ask your question as a comment to that introductory post.
- We'll answer your questions live during the event.
- Questions are answered in the order they're posted.

Remember to stay on topic so everyone's questions can be addressed. We'll answer questions specific to your scenario, but please don't share your health information since it's a public forum. This is your opportunity to ask questions about the TRICARE and FEDVIP open seasons.

If you have friends and family who may have questions about open season, please help spread the word about the TRICARE Webinar (Oct. 24) and TRICARE SITREP (Oct. 31).

[Implementing Wraparound Mental Health Services in Rural Communities](#)

Friday, Nov. 1, 2:00-3:30 pm ET

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) TA Network

[What Matters Most in Driving Cross-Sector Partnerships for Complex Populations](#)

Tuesday, November 5, 3:00-4:00 pm ET

The Better Care Playbook and the National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs

[State Respite Legislation: Advancing Respite for Family Caregivers](#)

Tuesday, November 12, 3:00-4:00 pm ET

ARCH Sustainability Learning Collaborative

NEW [Foundations: How to Build & Sustain the Communication Pipeline with Young Adults](#)

Wed., November 13, 4:00-5:00 pm ET

The Dibble Institute

[Expanding Access to School Behavioral Services via Telehealth](#)

Thursday, November 14, 2:00-3:00 pm ET

Healthy Students, Promising Futures Learning Collaborative

SERIES [Person-Centered Planning and Practice](#)

National Quality Forum/Administration for Community Living; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

- Friday, December 13, 2019, 1:00-3:30 pm ET
- Monday, January 6, 2020, 1:00-3:30 pm ET
- Monday, February 3, 2020, 12:30-3:00 pm ET
- Monday, June 1, 2020, 1:00-3:30 pm ET
- *[past] Friday, September 6, 2019*

CONGRESS

Prescription Drug Prices – New

[Pelosi moves on drug prices despite falling-out with Trump](#) (Associated Press, 10/17/19)

Repeated from last Update:

As explained in earlier Updates, both chambers of Congress and the administration seem serious about addressing high prescription drug prices, but there are significant differences of opinion about how to do so. The House Democrat's bill (Speaker Nancy Pelosi's [D-CA] "Lower Drug Costs Now Act of 2019" - [summary](#)) would require the government to negotiate Medicare payments for 25 or more key drugs. Senator Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has said, however, that the Pelosi bill is "dead on arrival" in the Senate.

On October 16, An [Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute](#) for H.R. 3 (the Pelosi bill) was released. It includes an amendment (pages 30-31), sought by disability advocates, that prohibits the use of research that treats extending the life of a person with a disability as less valuable than extending life of someone without a disability. (See Section 1182 of the Social Security Act.) This language is based on language included in the creation of the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) and Medicare coverage decisions.

A bipartisan (but still controversial) Senate Finance Committee bill ([S. 2543](#)) would basically tie drug prices to the rate of inflation. See [The Health 202: Impeachment Inquiry Lowers — But Doesn't Kill — Chance for Drug-Pricing Deal](#) (Washington Post “Power Post” blog, 10/14/19).

Recent developments:

- The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a [preliminary cost estimate](#) of the House Democrats’ bill, estimating that the main part of the bill would save the federal government \$345 billion over a seven-year period, but that the loss of revenue to drug companies could hamper research and development, resulting in about eight to 15 fewer new drugs coming to market over that seven-year period (compared to about 300 new drugs over 10 years, as usual). See [CBO: Pelosi Bill to Lower Drug Prices Saves Medicare \\$345 Billion](#) (The Hill, 10/11/19); [The Good, the Bad, and the Unknown in the House Plan to Lower Drug Costs](#) (Vox, 10/14/19).
- Leaders of the House Progressive Caucus [announced](#) on October 15 that they would support the Pelosi bill, after negotiating some changes they were seeking.
- The [House Blue Dog Caucus](#) of moderate Democrats, have called for the House to take up other drug-pricing legislation that could have bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. See [Blue Dogs Call on Congress to Take Up Additional Bipartisan Drug Pricing Legislation](#) (The Well News, 10/8/19).
- The House Energy and Commerce, Education and Labor, and Ways and Means committees are expected to mark up the bill this week.
- House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) has said that the House could vote on prescription drug legislation by the end of this month. See [House May Vote on Prescription Drug Bill This Month](#) (Washington Examiner, 10/11/19).

Surprise Medical Bills – Repeated from last Update

As reported in the [October 9](#) and [October 3](#) Washington Updates, there is keen interest in addressing the problem of surprise out-of-network medical bills. It is a controversial issue, however. While all proposals would take the burden of surprise bills off patients, key stakeholders prefer different approaches. Providers (hospitals, physicians, physician practice groups) prefer payments negotiated with insurance companies; insurers and employers prefer that payments be based on “benchmark” prices for the area. One key House committee chairperson has proposed that Congress require the administration to figure out a solution through a formal negotiated rulemaking process. It has been reported recently, however, that a Senate sponsor of a bipartisan bill predicts that surprise-billing legislation will pass Congress by the end of the year. See [Federal Surprise-Billing Legislation Will Likely Pass Congress by End of Year, US Senator Says](#) (Becker’s Hospital CFO Report, 10/14/19).

State legislation on surprise bills and prescription drug prices:

Meanwhile, many states are addressing these issues. See:

- [State Legislative Action to Lower Pharmaceutical Costs](#) (National Academy on State Health Policy, 9/26/19)
- [States Lead on Surprise Medical Billing Protections, Congress Poised to Follow](#) (National Academy on State Health Policy, updated 10/4/19)

ACA NEWS, INFORMATION, AND RESOURCES

[Open Enrollment resources from Young Invincibles](#)

(scroll down for customizable materials, email message, FB posts, and Tweets)

[What's New for 2020 Marketplace Enrollment?](#)

(Georgetown University Center on Health Insurance Reforms , 10/17/19) – provides an overview of several developments that affect this coming open enrollment.

[Premiums for Healthcare.Gov Plans Are Down 4 Percent But Remain Unaffordable to Non-Subsidized Consumers](#)

(CMS press release, 10/22/19)

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has released data showing that premiums for qualified ACA plans have declined, and the average number of plans available to consumers has increased. See also, [The Health 202: Obamacare Is Getting More Affordable under the Trump Administration](#) (Washington Post, 10/22/19).

NOTE: The 2020 Open Enrollment Period is November 1, 2019 to December 15, 2019. [View a list of 2019 CMS Navigator grantees.](#)

Assister Readiness Resources – Repeated from last Update

Modules for the first week of the 2020 Assister Readiness Webinar Series are now posted and ready to view! These modules cover topics relating to Helping Consumers Apply for Marketplace coverage. You can find the recordings and transcripts for the *Helping Consumers Apply* Assister Readiness Webinar Series modules here:

- **Preparing to Apply**
 - [Recording \(mp4\)](#) | [Transcript](#)
- **Creating and Submitting Applications**
 - [Recording \(mp4\)](#) | [Transcript](#)
- **Application Assistance Simulation**
 - [Recording \(mp4\)](#) | [Transcript](#)

As a reminder, The 2020 Assister Readiness Webinar Series is a supplement to the 2020 web-based Assister Certification Training. This series will be delivered in two weekly installments and will help get you ready to serve Marketplace consumers during the 2020 open enrollment period. Each installment will include three viewable, on-demand educational modules, and a corresponding LIVE webinar that will recap that week's topics and give you a chance to ask questions. **Our Live Webinar Recap for the Week One Modules will take place on Tuesday, October 22nd at 2pm Eastern Time.**

TRICARE – Repeated from last Update

About TRICARE Open Season

[See also the “Webinars” section, above, regarding a webinar and Facebook event about open season.]

- **FROM TRICARE: WHAT IS TRICARE OPEN SEASON AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?**
TRICARE Open Season is the annual period when you can enroll in or make changes to your TRICARE Prime, including US Family Health Plan, or TRICARE Select plan for the next year. The Federal Benefits Open Season is for enrollment in a Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) dental and vision plan. If you’re currently enrolled in a FEDVIP dental or vision plan and you don’t want to make a change, your enrollment will continue in 2020. If you wish to make changes to your existing plan, you must do so during open season. Both the TRICARE and FEDVIP open seasons will run from Nov. 11 to Dec. 9. Enrollment choices made during this period will take effect on Jan. 1, 2020.
 - [Information about TRICARE’S OPEN SEASON](#) – Nov. 11- Dec. 9
 - [2019 TRICARE Open Season, Federal Benefits Open Season Starts Next Month](#) (10/10/19)
 - [Compare 2020 FEDVIP Plans and Costs, Prepare for Open Season](#) (10/3/19)
- **TRICARE Health Matters Newsletter Issue 3**
Oct. 15, 2019
The latest TRICARE East Region and TRICARE West Region newsletters and the TRICARE Overseas Program (TOP) Health Matters Newsletter have information about Open Season. They can be downloaded [here](#).

From TRICARE Benefits Updates:

[TRICARE Website Expands to Include Military Hospital Sites](#)

10/15/2019

[Sign up for TRICARE email updates.](#)

Connect with TRICARE on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

OTHER NEWS AND INFORMATION

WORTH REPEATING:

- Family Voices held a webinar on *Leadership in Family and Professional Partnerships* (LFPP, formerly the National Center on Family-Professional Partnerships). [Here is a link to the archived webinar](#), with links to slides and recording.
- [Social Security Announces 1.6 Percent Benefit Increase for 2020](#) (SSA Press Release, 10/1/19); [additional information](#).

NEW RESOURCES FROM AGENCIES AND PARTNERS:

From Benefits.Gov:

At www.Benefits.gov, our goal is to help you discover and determine your eligibility for government assistance programs. We are excited to share the recently released, new and improved [Benefit Finder](#) tool to make it easier for you to find information on government benefits. The [Benefit Finder](#) is an online questionnaire that recommends benefits you may be eligible to receive based on answers to a series of questions. Try it out by clicking on the "Start" button. *Interested in hearing more from [Benefits.gov](#)? [Subscribe to the quarterly Compass Newsletter](#).*

From the Administration on Community Living (ACL):

[Peer Providers – How Your Experience Makes You Right for the Job](#) (from the [National Rehabilitation Information Center](#)), provides links to a wealth of resources related to “peer providers” – people with disabilities helping their peers in a variety of ways – and programs that support peer providers and self-advocates, such as the [Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center](#), which enhances leadership skills for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through fellowships to individuals, along with training and technical assistance to a variety of organizations.

WORTH REPEATING:

From the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

- [SAMHSA Launches New Suicide Prevention Resources Page](#)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has launched a new webpage that contains videos and other resources to help prevent suicide and offer support to those in crisis.

From the CDC:

- [Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs in Emergencies](#) (also [in Spanish](#))
- [Emergency Kit Checklist for Families with Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs \(CYSHCN\)](#)
- [Protecting the Health of Children with ADHD](#)

From Wright’s Law:

- [FAQs about Individualized Education Plans \(IEPs\)](#) (current issue of the [Special Ed Advocate](#) newsletter)
- [More information about IEPs](#)

YOUR INPUT SOUGHT

Due October 31. HHS/NIH, *All of Us* Research Program: [Request for Information \(RFI\) to Inform Tribal Collaborations](#). The *All of Us* research program seeks input on Tribal Nation issues and concerns, including the importance of proper handling of AI/AN biospecimens in accordance with Tribal beliefs and traditions, challenges with handling data from self-identified AI/AN individuals, and educating the research community on avoidance of stigmatizing research.

Family Voices, Inc. • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 37188, Albuquerque, NM 87176 • Physical Address: 3701 San Mateo Blvd NE, Suite 103, Albuquerque, NM 87110 • Phone: 505-872-4774 • Toll Free: 888-835-5669 • Fax: 505-872-4780 • Website: www.familyvoices.org

NEW: Call for Nominations: 2020 CMS Health Equity Award – Due November 15, 2019

Health equity is defined by Healthy People 2020 as the attainment of the highest level of health for all people. A measure of health equity is the reduction or elimination of disparities in health that adversely affect vulnerable populations. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recognizes the importance of health equity and is working to ensure that disparities in health care quality and access are eliminated.

The 2020 CMS Health Equity Award will shine a light on an organization leading the way on the path to equity, showing others how to reduce disparities in quality, access, and outcomes. The award will go to an organization who can demonstrate they have reduced disparities in health care quality, access, or outcomes between two or more groups. Populations of focus include racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities, and rural populations. All CMS partner/stakeholder organizations and networks, at the organizational level, are eligible for the award. *All nomination forms and questions about the award should be submitted to the CMS Office of Minority Health (ATTN: 2020 CMS Health Equity Award) at HealthEquityTA@cms.hhs.gov.*

FDA Patient Representatives

Are you a patient or caregiver who wants to get involved at FDA? Contact [the Patient Affairs Staff \(PAS\)](#) or follow them on Twitter [@FDAPatientInfo](#).

OF POSSIBLE INTEREST (NEW)

[Study Concludes Design of Rock 'N Play, Other Infant Sleepers Led to Deaths](#)

(Washington Post, 10/17/19) – explains dangers of inclined sleepers.

[Teen Suicides Are Increasing At an Alarming Pace, Outstripping All Other Age Groups, a New Report Says](#)

(Washington Post, 10/17/19)

[Comparing Health Insurance Reform Options: From “Building on the ACA” to Single Payer](#)

(The Commonwealth Fund, 10/16/19)

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT (repeated)

Data from the Combined 2017-2018 National Survey of Children’s Health Are Now Available through the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health

The Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health (DRC), under a cooperative agreement with the Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), is excited to announce the release of the **National Performance Measures (NPMs) and National Outcome Measures (NOMs) data findings** from the **Combined 2017-2018 National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH)**. All data are available through the **interactive data query** on childhealthdata.org! The combined 2017-2018 NSCH is the second multi-year data set since the [redesign of the NSCH in 2016](#) and includes data from 52,129 children ages 0-17 years.

For more information and resources on the NSCH, such as fast facts, guide to topics and questions, changes across years, survey methodology, survey instruments, and more, please visit the [DRC NSCH Overview page](#). There are also numerous resources available at [HRSA MCHB's webpage on the NSCH](#), including the [NSCH Fact Sheet](#). Public use files for the previous NSCH are also available through the [U.S. Census Bureau's NSCH page](#).

The remaining estimates of the combined 2017-2018 NSCH will be available through the interactive data query in November 2019, and downloadable data sets will be available in winter 2020. Single year 2018 NSCH estimates, downloadable data sets, and codebooks will be available through the DRC in spring 2020. If you have any questions, please contact CAHMI at info@cahmi.org. If you contact them and you are a Title V leader, please be sure to include this information.

We at Family Voices would love to hear any suggestions you might have about how to make the Update more useful to you. Does it provide the right amount of information? What parts are helpful and not so helpful? Please let us know! Comments and questions can be directed to jguerney@familyvoices.org.

Yours truly,
Janis Guerney
Director of Public Policy
Family Voices

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number U40MC00149. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by, HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.