

December 11, 2025



DC Update: Senate Votes on Pair of Measures to Address Health Care Costs, CMS Issues Guidance on Community Engagement Requirements for Medicaid Established by OBBBA, New NCSACW Webinars, and More.

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Capitol Hill Happenings

Senate Votes on Pair of Measures to Address Health Care Costs

Today, the Senate met to consider two different measures designed to address health care costs but neither bill managed to attract the 60-vote procedural threshold required to move either version into the debate phase.

The Senate first voted on the Republican-backed measure sponsored by Senator Cassidy (R-LA), Chair, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, and Senator Crapo (R-ID), Chair, Senate Finance Committee, the [*Health Care Freedom for Patients Act of 2025 \(S.3386\)*](#). The legislation would direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to deposit payments into Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) that are connected to Bronze levels plans or catastrophic level plans on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) exchanges in 2026 and 2027. The final vote was 51-48, with Senator Paul (R-KY) as the only Republican voting against the bill.

The Senate then voted on the Democrat-backed measure sponsored by Senator Schumer (D-NY), Minority Leader, the [*Lower Health Care Costs Act \(S.3385\)*](#). The legislation would extend the expiring COVID-19 era ACA enhanced premium subsidies for another three years. The final vote was 51-48, with Senators Collins (R-ME), Sullivan (R-AK), Murkowski (R-AK), and Hawley (R-MO) representing Republicans supporting this plan.

Actions in the House of Representatives: There is no proposal to date that the House Republican majority has rallied around. However, Speaker Johnson (R-LA) and Leader Scalise (R-LA) indicated work was being done to develop a product that would receive a vote next week. It appears that the legislation that would be brought to the House floor for a vote would be different than the bill considered in the Senate. Early indications are that the bill will include a combination of provisions related to HSAs, Association Health Plans, pharmacy benefit managers, and enhanced price transparency.

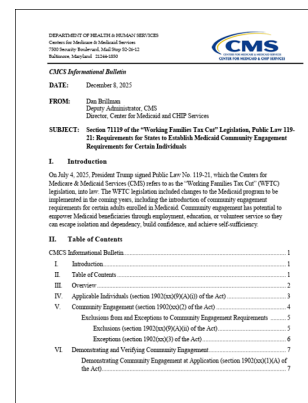
Outlook: The precise pathway to a final product related to health care costs clearing both the House and Senate remains unclear. In addition to the bills referenced above, several other proposals have been introduced in both chambers. The Senate is expected to turn to other business today and break for the weekend. The House will turn to health care legislation next week as noted above. Both chambers are scheduled to go on break for the December holidays at the conclusion of next week.

NASADAD will continue to monitor developments and report to the membership.

Around the Agencies

CMS Issues State Guidance on Community Engagement Requirements for Medicaid Established Under OBBA

On December 8, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released additional guidance in an [informational bulletin](#) for States on the new community engagement requirements for certain Medicaid beneficiaries established through the [One Big Beautiful Bill Act \(P.L. 119-21\)](#) (referred to by CMS as the Working Families Tax Cut (WFTC) legislation) signed into law by President Trump on July 4, 2025. Specifically, the guidance is designed to offer an overview of the legislation, changes to the community engagement requirements under Medicaid and applicable exceptions, and strategies for maintaining compliance. The guidance comes as States face a January 1, 2027, deadline to begin implementing changes and notify current beneficiaries about the new community engagement requirements, with required outreach starting between July and September 2026 depending on each State's chosen approach.



CMS will issue additional rules by June 1, 2026.

CMS also released an [informational bulletin](#) summarizing Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)-related provisions under OBBA and other [guidance](#) on the new requirements for health care-related (provider) taxes in Medicaid established by OBBA.

Additional guidance and technical assistance on Medicaid reforms through OBBA can be found on Medicaid's website, [here](#).

DEA Launches Fentanyl Free America Initiative

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) recently announced the launch of [Fentanyl Free America](#), a new enforcement initiative and public awareness campaign targeting the rise of fentanyl across the U.S. Managed by DEA's Community Outreach and Prevention Support Section, the initiative aims to reduce both the supply and demand of fentanyl in communities across America through targeted enforcement efforts and heightened public engagement. Ultimately, the initiative seeks to protect communities from synthetic opioids by disrupting fentanyl supply chains, reducing the availability of fentanyl, and connecting Americans to life-saving services. In support of the launch of *Fentanyl Free America*, DEA released a series of [promotional materials](#) highlighting the initiative, including fact sheets, posters, and social media graphics.

DEA's press release announcing the launch of the initiative can be found [here](#).

SAMHSA's GAINS Center Seeking Applications for Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Mapping Workshop



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Gather, Assess, Integrate, Network, and Stimulate (GAINS) Center is seeking applications for its [Sequential Intercept Model \(SIM\) Mapping Workshops](#). These workshops seek to bring a cross-system, multidisciplinary group of key stakeholders from a particular jurisdiction to facilitate collaboration and reduce barriers between the criminal justice and mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) system through integrated local strategic action plans. The GAINS Center will provide SIM Workshops, which are expected to be held in-person, free of charge to selected applicants from April to August 2026. Further, the GAINS Center will cover all costs associated with the application, pre-and post-workshop planning, travel and lodging, facilitation, data collection and analysis, and report development.

Priority consideration is given to applicants from local criminal justice and mental health and SUD agencies and organizations. Applications are due January 12, 2026.

Additional details, including on eligibility and how to apply, can be found in the program's solicitation, [here](#).

The GAINS Center is hosting an informational webinar on the solicitation on December 17, at 2:00 pm ET. [Registration](#) is required.

Research Roundup

Study on Trends in Methadone Use for Pain and Opioid Use Disorder Among Medicaid Enrollees

A group of researchers from the University of Pennsylvania published a study in *JAMA Health Forum* on [Trends in Methadone Use for Pain and Opioid Use Disorder Among Medicaid Enrollees](#). The study analyzed data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program Payment and Access Commission data book on the number of patients receiving methadone or buprenorphine for opioid use disorder (OUD) among adult Medicaid enrollees between 1999 and 2020 to quantify the use of medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) in the Medicaid population and assess any potential shifts in MOUD. Specifically, the study found modest increases in methadone and buprenorphine use for OUD among Medicaid enrollees between 1999 and 2010, with buprenorphine use rising to 12.0 per 1000 Medicaid enrollees and methadone use growing to a lesser degree to 6.2 per 1,000 Medicaid enrollees by 2020.

Despite increases in MOUD use, the authors report that just ~25% of individuals with OUD receive MOUD and call for the expansion of take-home MOUD doses and further research on the effects of expanding authorized methadone prescribers and permitting methadone prescriptions at pharmacies to improve MOUD access.

Webinars to Watch

NCSACW Webinar Series: Ready-to-Use Resources



National Center on
Substance Abuse
and Child Welfare

The National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare (NCSACW), jointly funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is hosting a four-part webinar series on [Ready-to-Use Resources](#). This no-cost series will highlight four new resources developed by NCSACW designed to provide professionals with tools to enhance collaboration across child welfare, mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) services, and courts to improve child and family outcomes. Specifically,

each 30-minute session will explore key features of each resource, practical applications, and implementation strategies to support cross-system collaboration and trauma-informed approaches to SUD. The sessions and featured resources can be found below:

- *Session 1: Bridging Systems: Domestic Violence, Substance Use & Mental Health*
 - December 11, at 2:00 pm ET
 - Featured resource: [Strengthening System Collaboration for Families at the Intersection of Domestic Violence and Co-Occurring Substance Use and Mental Health Disorders](#)
- *Session 2: Carry the Message Toolkit*
 - January 15, at 2:00 pm ET
 - Featured resource: [Toolkit: Carry the Message: How Substance Use Disorder Treatment Agencies Can Help Child Welfare Agencies Meet the Safety Needs of Children](#)
- *Session 3: Centering Families in Outpatient Treatment*
 - January 29, at 2:00 pm ET
 - Featured resource: [Implementing a Family-Centered Approach in Outpatient Treatment](#)
- *Session 4: Toolkit for Trauma-informed Care*
 - February 12, at 2:00 pm ET
 - Featured resource: [Collaborative Teams Toolkit for Trauma-Informed Care](#)

Registration is required.

NCSACW Webinar: Substance Use Trends: The Effects on Child Safety and Family Risk Factors

The National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare (NCSACW), jointly funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is hosting a webinar on [Substance Use Trends: The Effects on Child Safety and Family Risk Factors](#). This no-cost webinar is on December 17, at 2:00 pm ET. The webinar is designed to provide an overview of current substance use trends and their impact on both child safety and family risk factors, as well as strategies to reduce stigma, improve parent engagement, and strengthen protective capacities from substance use in families. Specifically, national experts will share insights from the National Opioid Environmental Scan on the rise of fentanyl and other substances and family-centered tools to improve outcomes for children and families affected by substance use disorder (SUD). Discussion topics include:

- “How do evolving substance use patterns affect children and families?”
- How does stigma shape access to services and outcomes for families affected by substance use?
- What are some strategies to assess safety and risk while building protective capacities in families?”

Registration is required.

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