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D.C. Update: NIH grants for research on OUD treatment in criminal justice settings, a bipartisan budget deal, and more



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Capitol Hill Happenings

Lawmakers reach deal with Administration on federal budget

On July 22nd, Congressional leaders and the Administration announced that they reached a deal, the [2019 Bipartisan Budget Agreement](#), to increase federal spending for the next two years. The draft budget deal would set federal discretionary spending limits at \$2.7 trillion for FY 2020 and FY 2021, increasing spending by \$321 billion over two years. Under this deal, non-defense discretionary funding, which includes funding for public health programs, would total \$632 billion in FY 2020. With this increase, in FY 2020 (Oct. 1, 2019-Sept. 30, 2020), federal agencies could have approximately a 4 percent increase in funding compared to FY 2019.

Of the \$321 billion in increased discretionary spending, only \$77 billion would be offset. Offsets would come from an extension of cuts to Medicare and other programs that were set to expire in 2027, as well as increased fees on cargo and passengers arriving in the U.S.

The bill passed the House of Representatives yesterday (284-194), and the Senate is expected to vote on and pass the measure next week. The President has

Around the Agencies

NIH announces grant program to support research on opioid addiction treatment in criminal justice settings

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) [announced](#) the creation of a network to support research on addiction treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD) in criminal justice settings. The Justice Community Opioid Innovation Network (JCOIN) includes 10 research institutions and two centers for supportive infrastructure, receiving an estimated \$155 million in grant funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). According to the announcement, "JCOIN will establish a national network of investigators collaborating with justice and behavioral health stakeholders to research promising interventions and other approaches to improve the capacity of the justice system to respond to the opioid crisis." The funded institutions and respective site locations include:

- New York State Psychiatric Institute – New York
- Baystate Medical Center – Massachusetts
- Friends Research Institute, Inc. – Maryland
- Texas Christian University – Illinois, New Mexico, Texas
- New York University School of Medicine – Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon
- Brown University – North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island
- University of Chicago – Illinois
- Chestnut Health Systems, Inc. – Illinois
- University of Kentucky – Kentucky
- Yale University – Connecticut, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Puerto Rico

CMS releases updated Medicaid and CHIP Scorecard

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently released an updated Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) [Scorecard](#). The first Scorecard was released in June 2018, and the latest version offers updated information on selected health and program indicators, as well as a description of the Medicaid and CHIP programs and how they operate. According to an announcement, the Scorecards are used to improve Medicaid's and CHIP's transparency and accountability. The updated version reflects States' progress in increasing their reporting of patients' health outcomes, particularly related to substance use and mental health. The Scorecard includes State and federal measures in three areas: State Health System Performance; State Administrative Accountability; and Federal Administrative Accountability.

CMS publishes plan to provide housing-related supports under Medicaid to those with SUD

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published a [Report to Congress](#) that includes an Action Plan adhering to the requirements of Section 1018(a) of the Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act of 2018. Section 1018(a) requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to "provide technical assistance and support to States regarding the development and expansion of innovative State strategies (including through State Medicaid demonstration projects) to provide housing-related supports and services and care coordination services under Medicaid to individuals with substance use disorders (SUD)." According to the report, CMS plans to expand technical assistance efforts by offering States individualized, State-specific needs assessments related to Medicaid housing initiatives. Other plans include: identifying and disseminating best practices and lessons learned; promoting performance measurement and reporting and quality improvement activities; and promoting awareness of existing options for housing-related supports under

In the News

Study finds "Six Building Blocks" program led to a decrease in opioid prescribing

A [study](#) recently published in *The Annals of Family Medicine* examines the effect of an opioid medication management program on opioid prescribing. The Six Building Blocks program, funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), was implemented in 20 rural primary health clinics utilizing a team-based redesign of opioid medication management. According to the study, The Six Building Blocks are as follows: providing leadership support; revising and aligning clinic policies, use of patient agreements, and defined workflows; tracking the patient population; implementing planned, patient-centered visits; identifying resources for complex patients; and measuring success. Results of the study showed that the number of patients prescribed opioids decreased by 2.2% and the number of patients on long-term opioid therapy fell by 14% during the 15-month study period. Researchers concluded that the Six Building Blocks program is an effective strategy for improving opioid prescribing practices.

CDC reports decline in prescription opioid overdoses from 2017-2018

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [reported a 5% decline in drug overdose deaths](#) from 2017-2018, including a decrease in prescription opioid overdoses. However, four other drug categories – methamphetamine and other stimulants, cocaine, heroin, and fentanyl – have seen significant increases as the cause of overdose deaths. Fentanyl has surpassed all drugs as the most lethal overdose substance. In a [statement](#) from Alex Azar, Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), he stated that, "The latest provisional data on overdose deaths show that America's united efforts to curb opioid use disorder and addiction are working. Lives are being saved, and we're beginning to win the fight against this crisis... While the declining trend of overdose deaths is an encouraging sign, by no means have we declared victory against the epidemic or addiction in general. This crisis developed over two decades and it will not be solved overnight."