

Wynne Health Group Weekly



FRAMING THE WEEK

Medicare

The highly anticipated and long overdue 2021 Medicare Trustees Report is expected to be released tomorrow, August 31. With Medicare reform a major component of Democrats' \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation package – in terms of both generating savings through drug pricing reform and spending for vision, hearing, and dental benefits – the projected insolvency date of the Hospital Insurance (HI) Trust Fund and total spending growth of the Medicare program, among other findings, will shape the legislative debate.

Most notably, the 2021 report will account for the potential effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, a key factor that was not reflected in the [2020 report](#). Last year, the Medicare Trustees estimated that the HI trust Fund will no longer be able to pay scheduled benefits beginning in 2026. In a [February 2021 report](#), the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projected that the HI fund will become insolvent in 2026, expecting a faster economy recovery and lower spending on hospital services. It remains to be seen how the surge of COVID-19 cases due to the Delta variant will affect the Trustees' projections.

The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) spoke to the impending insolvency concerns in its June 2020 [Report to Congress](#) – published in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic – and recommended Medicare would need to rapidly expand the use of value-based care to control program spending. As for the SMI Trust Fund (Parts B and D), the Trustees found it to be “adequately financed” for the next 10 years and beyond (i.e., “indefinitely”).

This morning, Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA), Chairman of the Special Committee on Aging, is convening a [hearing](#) in Pennsylvania to discuss expanding Medicare to include vision, hearing, and dental benefits. As a point of reference, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) previously [estimated](#) that providing dental, vision, and hearing coverage under the Medicare program, as proposed by House Democrats' [H.R. 3](#) (116th Congress), would cost roughly \$358 billion over a decade – \$238 billion for dental care, \$30 billion for vision care, and \$89 billion for hearing services.

Later this week, MedPAC will [convene](#) to discuss Medicare's financial outlook and the effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency on Medicare payment adequacy. Commissioners will also discuss:

- Potential reforms to Part D's low-income subsidy (LIS), such as automatic enrollment of LIS enrollees in prescription drug plans and modifying the method for setting the benchmark to promote competition and reduce Medicare spending;
- A value-based payment program for all post-acute care (PAC) providers; and

- The impact of two statutory changes to home health payments implemented in 2020 (a 30-day unit of payment and elimination of therapy visits provided during an episode as a payment factor).

COVID-19 Vaccine

Today, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will [meet](#) to vote on updating its recommendation for the Pfizer-BioNTech (COMIRNATY) COVID-19 Vaccine for individuals 16 years and older. It is the first COVID-19 vaccine to be [approved](#) by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

ACIP will also discuss a “framework for COVID-19 booster doses.” In a [speech](#) on August 18, President Biden had announced that individuals would be eligible for boosters eight months after receiving the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna mRNA vaccines. “Pending approval from the Food and Drug Administration and the CDC’s Committee of outside experts, we’ll be ready to start these booster — this booster program during the week of September 20, in which time anyone fully vaccinated on or before January 20 will be eligible to get a booster shot,” Biden said.

THIS WEEK IN HEALTH POLICY

Mon. (8/30)

- **10:00am – Hearing: Medicare Vision and Dental** – The Senate Special Committee on Aging convenes a hearing titled, “Eyes, Ears and Teeth: Expanding Medicare to Cover Whole Person Care.” [Details.](#)
- **10:00am – CDC Meeting: COVID-19 Vaccines** – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices holds a virtual meeting to discuss the safety of and recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines and boosters. [Details.](#)
- **1:00pm – SAMHSA Meeting: Agency Priorities** – The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) holds a meeting by teleconference of the National Advisory Council to hear from the new Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use and discuss agency priorities. [Details.](#)

Tue. (8/31)

- **12:00pm – AHP Meeting: Medicare** – The Alliance for Health Policy (AHP) holds a meeting titled, “Medicare Payment Reform: Lessons Learned and Consideration for the Future.” [Details.](#)

Wed. (9/1)

- **10:30am – NIH Meeting: Addiction** –The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Helping to End Addiction Long-Term (HEAL) Multi-Disciplinary Working Group holds a meeting to provide updates on HEAL projects. [Details.](#)

Thurs. (9/2)

- **10:00am – HRSA Meeting: Vaccines** – The Health Resources and services Administration (HRSA) holds a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Childhood Vaccines to hear updates on the safety and status of childhood vaccines. [Details.](#)

Fri. (9/3)

- **9:00am – NIH Meeting: Obesity** – The NIH National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases holds a symposium of the Obesity Research Task Force about obesity and COVID-19. [Details.](#)

Additional Multi-Day Events

- **September 2-September 3 – Meeting: MedPAC** – The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) holds a public meeting to discuss Medicare payment and policy issues. [Details.](#)
- **September 2-September 3 – 10:00am FDA Meeting: Gene Therapy** – The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Cellular, Tissue, and Gene Therapies Advisory Committee holds a meeting to discuss the toxicity risks of adeno-associated virus vector-based gene therapy products. [Details.](#)

FEATURED WHG ANALYSIS

- **WHG Side-by-Side of Medicaid Expansion Gap Bills** – In the Policy Hub Insight Bank [here.](#)
- **WHG Side-by-Side of Health Technology Assessment Models** – In the Policy Hub Insight Bank [here.](#)
- **WHG Updated 2021 Legislative and Regulatory Outlook** – In the Policy Hub Insight Bank [here.](#)
- **WHG Chart Key Federal Public Option Bills in the 117th Congress; Side-by-Side Comparison** – In the Policy Hub Insight Bank [here.](#)
- **WHG Overview of Recent Development on Federal Telehealth Policy** – In the Policy Hub Insight Bank [here.](#)
- **WHG Chart of the Major Drug Pricing Proposals in the 117th Congress** – In the Policy Hub Insight Bank [here.](#)

REGULATORY LOOKBACK

Fri. (8/20)

- **The Supreme Court** rejected the Biden-Harris Administration’s eviction moratorium arguing that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) exceeded its statutory authority. [Details.](#)

Thurs. (8/19)

- **CMS** formally [announced](#) its timeline for nationwide implementation of the Prior Authorization [Model](#) for Repetitive, Scheduled Non-Emergent Ambulance Transports (RSNAT). [Details.](#)
- **CMS** [announced](#) that Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) participating in the Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP) saved the Medicare program \$1.9 billion dollars in 2020. [Details.](#)
- **ICER** announced it will assess the comparative clinical effectiveness and value of five treatments for COVID-19. [Details.](#)

Wed. (8/25)

- **CMS** released several analyses of the impact of COVID-19 on Medicare beneficiaries in [nursing homes](#) and COVID-19 [vaccine administration claims](#) among Medicare beneficiaries. [Details.](#)

Tues. (8/24)

- **CMS** [announced](#) that it will reimburse providers the increased payment rate (~\$75 a dose) for at-home COVID-19 vaccinations. [Details.](#)
- **The USPSTF** [issued](#) a final recommendation statement in favor of screening for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes in adults ages 35 to 70 years who are overweight or obese. [Details.](#)

Mon. (8/23)

- **The Departments of Labor, HHS, and the Treasury** issued [FAQs](#) regarding the implementation of transparency requirements in the No Surprises Act and the Transparency in Coverage Final Rules. [Details.](#)
- **The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia** denied an emergency request from two chapters of the National Association of Realtors to block the CDC’s eviction moratorium. [Details.](#)

COMMENT & APPLICATION DEADLINES

- **August 30:** HRSA [announced](#) three funding opportunities totaling \$103 million from the American Rescue Plan Act to address mental health needs. [Details.](#)
- **August 30:** HRSA [announced](#) a funding opportunity for the Teaching Health Center Planning and Development Program. [Details.](#)
- **August 30:** HRSA [announced](#) a funding opportunity for Teaching Health Center Planning and Development Technical Assistance. [Details.](#)
- **August 31:** The CDC [seeks](#) nominations for the CDC/Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) Advisory Committee on HIV, Viral Hepatitis, and STD Prevention and Treatment (CHACHSPT). [Details.](#)
- **September 13:** CMS [released](#) its calendar year (CY) 2022 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) proposed rule. [Details.](#)
- **September 15:** The NIH Office of Research on Women's Health [requests](#) comments to inform planning of the Women's Health Consensus Conference. [Details.](#)
- **September 17:** The CDC [announced](#) it is seeking nominations for individuals to serve as members of the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee. [Details.](#)
- **September 17:** CMS [released](#) the CY 2022 Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System and ASC Payment System Proposed Rule. [Details.](#)
- **September 19:** HRSA [seeks comments](#) on draft updates to the [Women's Preventive Services Guidelines](#). [Details.](#)
- **September 21:** HRSA [announced](#) a funding opportunity for the teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) New and Expanded Residency Program. [Details.](#)
- **September 25:** The FDA [announced](#) a request for nominees to serve as voting or nonvoting consumer representatives on several agency advisory committees. [Details](#)
- **September 28:** CMS [issued](#) a proposed rule that would authorize states to make payment to third parties, to facilitate easier access to employee benefits. [Details.](#)
- **October 9:** CMS [issued](#) a proposed rule with rescind the Most Favored Nation (MFN) Model interim final rule. [Details.](#)
- **October 11:** The Department of Agriculture RHS [announced](#) available grant funding for the establishment of the Emergency Rural Health Care Grant Program. [Details.](#)
- **December 11:** The FDA [issued](#) a request for comments on issues related to the post-approval regulation of PANDAs. [Details.](#)
- **October 18:** The CDC [seeks comments](#) on two contraception guidance documents, which provide evidence-based recommendations to assist health care providers when counseling patients on contraceptive choice and use. [Details.](#)

WHG Contacts for Inquiries

Alyssa Llamas: alyssa@wynnehealth.com; (562) 207-8807

Billy Wynne: billy@wynnehealth.com; (202) 309-0796

Erin Slifer: erin@wynnehealth.com; (410) 984-4552

