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HHS Region IV News Bulletin: Wednesday, May 28 2014

Visit HHS.gov/Healthcare and CuidadodeSalud.Gov, two consumer-focused health care websites to: [find insurance options](#), [compare care quality](#), **and learn about the law**. How is the Affordable Care Act helping you? Share your story [here](#).

ACA News

✱ May 23, 2014

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced a new partnership with the state of Texas to test an initiative to improve services for Medicare-Medicaid enrollees. Under the demonstration, Texas and CMS will contract with Medicare-Medicaid Plans, which will provide an integrated set of Medicare and Medicaid benefits to enrolled beneficiaries in six counties. A fact sheet on the demonstration project is available [here](#); information on the Texas demonstration is available [here](#); information on the Financial Alignment Initiative is available [here](#); and information about the STAR+PLUS program is [here](#).

✱ May 22, 2014

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services announced plans to expand a successful demonstration for prior authorization for power mobility devices, test prior authorization in additional services in two new demonstration programs, and propose regulation for prior authorization for certain durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies. Prior authorization supports the administration's ongoing efforts to safeguard beneficiaries' access to medically necessary items and services, while reducing improper Medicare billing and payments. The proposed rule is estimated to reduce Medicare spending by \$100 to \$740 million over the next ten years. Prior authorization does not create additional documentation requirements or delay medical service. It requires the same information that is currently necessary to support Medicare payment, but earlier in the process. CMS believe prior authorization is an effective way to ensure compliance with Medicare rules for some items and services.

The proposed rule will publish on **May 28th** and will be open for public comments until July 28th. The document will be available for public inspection [here](#). More information is available [here](#). Below are a series of links to additional fact sheets:

- <http://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2014-Fact-sheets-items/2014-05-22-2.html>
- <http://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2014-Fact-sheets-items/2014-05-22-3.html>
- <http://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2014-Fact-sheets-items/2014-05-22-4.html>

✱ May 22, 2014

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced additional opportunities made possible by the Affordable Care Act that offer states and innovators tools and flexibility to transform health care.

The first batch of twelve prospective recipients for round two of the Health Care Innovation Awards, are receiving as much as \$110 million in combined funding. The twelve prospective recipients will test models in four categories and will span 13 states. Additionally, HHS is announcing a second round of funding, up to \$730 million, under the State Innovation Models initiative. You can read the State Innovation Models Funding Opportunity Announcement [here](#). Additional information about the Health Care Innovation Awards is available [here](#). To learn more about other innovative models being tested by the CMS Innovation Center, please visit: innovation.cms.gov.

✴ **May 20, 2014**

The US Department of Health & Human Services published a new proposed rule that would provide eligible professionals, eligible hospitals, and critical access hospitals more flexibility in how they use certified electronic health record (EHR) technology (CEHRT) to meet meaningful use. The proposed rule, from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), would let providers use the 2011 Edition CEHRT or a combination of 2011 and 2014 Edition CEHRT for the EHR reporting period in 2014 for the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs.

Additional information on EHR Incentive Programs is available [here](#). CEHRT information is available [here](#). Incentive Payments for CEHRT (CMS-0052-P) PDF are available at the [Federal Register](#)

✴ **May 19, 2014**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued final regulations (CMS-4159-F) for the Medicare Advantage and prescription drug benefit (Part D) programs that continue efforts to curb fraud and abuse and to improve benefits and the quality of care for seniors and people with disabilities enrolled in these programs. The final rule is projected to save an estimated \$1.615 billion over the next ten years 2015 – 2024. The final 2015 Part C and D rule fact sheet is available [here](#). The final rule can be viewed [here](#)

✴ **Special Enrollment Period Categories:**

Job-change: If you lose your job-based health insurance, you have two options for health insurance coverage. You may buy an individual plan through the Marketplace. Or, you may be able to keep your health insurance for a limited time through a program called [COBRA continuation coverage](#).

Options Available for COBRA Enrollees Between Now and July 1, 2014

Consumers who are currently enrolled in COBRA continuation have the option of switching to a Marketplace plan between now and July 1, 2014. If interested, COBRA enrollees should call the Marketplace Call Center at 1-800-318-2596, and inform the Call Center that they are calling about their COBRA benefits and the Marketplace. Once determined eligible, consumers can view all plans available to them and continue the enrollment process over the phone or online, by creating an account on HealthCare.Gov or logging into their existing account.

Additional information on COBRA is available [here](#).

A fact sheet on losing employer sponsored coverage is available [here](#).

A press release announcing the Department of Labor's proposal to clarify COBRA notices is available [here](#).

The updated COBRA model notices are posted on the Department of Labor website at <http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/modelgeneralnotice.doc> and <http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/modelectionnotice.doc>

The Spanish version of the COBRA general notice is available [here](#)

The Spanish version of the COBRA election notice is available [here](#)

You can read more about the options you have if you have a job-change in this **Job-Change One-Pager** available [here](#).

Job-change for assisters: A loss of a job and income in the family is hard enough and many people in this situation are also losing their employer-sponsored health insurance coverage. As assisters, you can help consumers who are facing this difficult situation find the best coverage option. This fact sheet entitled, **Job-Change for assisters**, will provide help assisters *understand* how they can help individuals that are losing

Employer-sponsored coverage. The fact sheet is available [here](#).

College Graduates: As a new college graduate, you're taking the next steps on your professional and personal journeys. But to handle the bumps on those journeys, you also need health insurance. This fact sheet will help college graduates understand the importance of having health care, and will provide them with information on where they can go to enroll into a health plan upon graduation. The **College Graduates** fact sheet is available [here](#).

HHS News

✱ May 20, 2014

The United States, Canada and Mexico have adopted a set of principles and guidelines on how the three countries' governments will share in advance public information and communications products during health emergencies of mutual interest. U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Canada's Minister of Health Rona Ambrose and Mexico's Secretary of Health Mercedes Juan signed a Declaration of Intent, formally adopting the principles and guidelines, at a trilateral meeting today during the 67th World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland.

The **full Declaration of Intent** is available in English [here](#), in Spanish [here](#) and in French [here](#).

The press release is available [here](#) in English, [here](#) in Spanish and [here](#) in French.

✱ May 19, 2014

May 19 is the third national Hepatitis Testing Day. The observance was established in the Action Plan for the Prevention Care & Treatment of Viral Hepatitis to raise greater awareness of an often silent epidemic. Chronic viral hepatitis affects as many as 5.3 million Americans. Most do not know that they are infected, and are at risk for severe, even fatal, complications from the disease, and can spread the virus to others. You can read the statement by Dr. Koh, Assistant Secretary for Health [here](#). More information on Hepatitis Testing Day is available [here](#).

✱ May 19, 2014

Honoring Emergency Medical Services during EMS Week. Over the past century, the field of emergency medical services has grown from hospital interns who rode in horse-drawn carriages transporting the sick and injured in a few cities during the 1800s. Today our nation draws on diverse network of nearly a million EMS physicians, nurses, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, dispatchers, and support staff in every community. With each passing year, EMS has demonstrated increasing importance in our nation's health care system. You can read the statement by Dr. Nicole Lurie, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response [here](#).

Health Care Blog Posts

✱ May 22, 2014

In the blog entitled, **Open Payments Data Collection Moves Forward**, Shantanu Agrawal discusses the Open Payments Program (previously known as the Sunshine Act). This program offers patients the opportunity to know if their doctors have a financial relationship with companies that make or supply medicines, medical supplies or devices, and the biological products used in their care. Disclosure of these relationships will allow patients to be more informed health care consumers. In this first year of the Open Payments program, health care manufacturing companies and group purchasing organizations (GPOs) will report the financial interactions they had with physicians and teaching hospitals in the last five months of 2013. These payments could include things like compensation for meals, travel, gifts, consulting, and research and are reported to CMS by industry companies. You can read the entire blog [here](#)

Educational Materials

Below you'll find materials related to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

Info-Graphahics

View all our **Flickr Info-Graphs** page [here](#).

Public Service Announcement/Address

Health Insurance Marketplace

For more information about the Health Insurance Marketplace including official resources, research, news, and events visit <http://marketplace.cms.gov/>

Marketplace Updates

For information on how to sign up for coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace, including text message and email updates visit <http://www.healthcare.gov/marketplace/index.html>

State by State Fact Sheets

Choose your state to learn more about the immediate benefits of the Affordable Care Act, <http://www.healthcare.gov/law/information-for-you/index.html>

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