



## Policy Brief

May 14, 2021



### American Families Plan Highlights Social Determinants of Health

President Biden recently [released](#) the second portion of his spending and tax plan, a \$1.8 trillion package called the American Families Plan. This joins the \$2.3 trillion [American Jobs Plan](#) released by the President in March as part of his effort to rebuild the U.S. economy after the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan focuses on education and safety net programs, which can [improve](#) health outcomes and make health more equitable because they address the social determinants of health. While the measures included are only proposed and still need congressional approval, they serve as a starting point for negotiations in the House and the Senate.

#### **American Families Plan**

President Biden's massive agenda includes education and safety net program proposals that would be paid for by tax increases and other changes by the IRS. Key proposals in the [American Families Plan](#) include:

- Two years of tuition-free college
- Public prekindergarten for all 3- and 4-year-olds
- Paid family and medical leave for American workers
- \$45 billion to nutrition programs
- \$225 billion to childcare programs
- \$600 billion in the expansion of child tax credits
- \$46 billion to colleges and universities that serve minority groups

## **A Push to Address Social Determinants of Health**

The American Families Plan continues to build on President Biden's goal to incorporate health equity into all policymaking, demonstrated by the dollars being allocated to nutrition programs, childcare programs and universities serving minority groups. These priorities were also seen in the President's first [infrastructure plan](#), which focused on affordable housing, public schools and high-speed broadband. While the push to address social issues tend to be much larger under a Democratic Administration, we saw similar [efforts](#) under the Trump Administration that reveal it is becoming more of a bipartisan priority.

## **What is Coming Next**

The packages released by President Biden are full of Democratic priorities, which may make them much more difficult to pass. The biggest [hurdle](#) are the large price tags, which President Biden is planning on paying for with increased taxes on wealthy Americans and corporations and restructuring the IRS. Democrats would have to be completely unified to pass the bill without Republican support, which would be very difficult to achieve. If this happens, President Biden may use the budget reconciliation process to pass his priorities. We expect to see a continual emphasis from the Biden Administration to address issues that impact health equity.



## **Still in the Spotlight: Hospital Price Transparency**

CMS' [price transparency rule](#) became effective this January, requiring that hospitals publish their payer-specific negotiated rates as well as the overall prices of 300 “shoppable services;” compliance rates have been [lower](#) than the Administration hoped. Price transparency has widespread support, but there are many differences of opinion on its implementation. Along with federal efforts, state lawmakers, local governments, and even [Hollywood](#) and [street artists](#) have joined the price transparency discussion, ensuring that it remains in the spotlight. For more on the latest price transparency efforts and what to expect, keep reading.

## **What's the latest on CMS' price transparency mandate?**

It has been nearly five months since CMS' price transparency mandate became effective as finalized in the [hospital price transparency](#) final rule. The rule aims to help consumers better understand the costs associated with their care and, hopefully, shop around for the best price.

Many hospitals support this goal but worry that the rule's requirements do not actually provide patients with meaningful price and quality information. Recently, a new study revealed that many large systems are not in compliance with the latest requirements, prompting CMS to begin [issuing warnings](#) to noncompliant hospitals.

### **Are there any state-level efforts to promote price transparency?**

Several states have begun passing bills to increase hospital compliance with CMS' price transparency rule. Some of these bills increase the financial penalties associated with noncompliance; others promote consumer-friendly search tools that provide patients with easy-to-obtain cost estimates. To date, 18 states have created all-payer claims databases, with six more states soon to follow. For a summary of recent state actions related to price transparency, [click here](#).

### **What should health systems expect in the near future?**

While the Biden Administration has [not explicitly said](#) how it will promote compliance with the Trump-era price transparency rule, CMS' willingness to begin privately citing noncompliant health systems shows that the issue continues to be top of mind for policymakers. Independent health policy think-tanks have begun analyzing the number of health systems that provide standard charges, payer-specific negotiated rates and out-of-pocket estimates. Top news outlets like the [Wall Street Journal](#) continue to report on hospital noncompliance, indicating that price transparency is unlikely to leave the spotlight any time soon.



### **Vaccine Hesitancy:**

#### **Understanding the Reasons Behind the Push Back**

The U.S. vaccination rollout has made significant progress in the number of people that have received the shot. According to the CDC, 45.8% of people have received at least one shot, with 34.4% being fully vaccinated. Vaccines have become readily available, with many places offering walk-in appointments. However, the number of people [receiving](#) the vaccine is starting to drop, indicating that many individuals who want the vaccine may have already received it. The next [challenge](#) will be to identify and convince those that are hesitant, skeptical or apathetic to the

importance of immunization. Understanding and addressing their concerns can help to increase inoculation numbers as America strives for herd immunity.

### **What do we know about trends in vaccine acceptance?**

- Younger people are [less](#) likely to get the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Political and religious [affiliation](#) plays a role. People who identify as Republican, conservative and/or evangelical are less likely to get vaccinated.
- A common misconception is spreading, [incorrectly linking](#) the vaccine with infertility. Evidence shows that there is no correlation between vaccination and any ill effects on fertility.
- Black and Latinx communities have been [harder to reach](#) and are not receiving the vaccine at the same rates as their Asian and White counterparts.

### **Why is vaccine hesitancy such an important issue?**

For the country to reach herd immunity, the U.S. [needs to inoculate](#) 70% of adults. Currently, there is an [underrepresentation](#) of vaccinations for people between the ages of 18 and 49, a segment of the population with the most childbearing and child-rearing responsibilities. As vaccines become [available](#) to children, convincing their parents of the importance and safety of the vaccine will determine whether minors receive the shot. Many young people view their risk of contracting or dying from COVID-19 as low; hence vaccination is not a priority or necessity. While COVID-19 impacted more of the elderly population in the past, new variants and more active social lives have [increased](#) the number of younger people contracting the disease.

### **What is being done to reach people who are hesitant?**

Many public and private institutes are offering [incentives](#) to motivate people to get vaccinated. For example, sports teams are offering free tickets in exchange for vaccination and universities are toying with the idea of providing financial incentives to encourage vaccine adoption. New [guidelines](#) have been released by the CDC on activities that fully vaccinated people can safely participate in, indicating a potential return to normalcy and relaxing of restrictive measures. As vaccination rates slow down, it will be critical to switch from mass vaccination sites to a more tailored approach. Continued [outreach](#) and community level involvement are good at creating dialogue that can help individuals overcome their concerns and fears surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine.

## **Updates to COVID-19 Regulations**

AHPA continues to follow new COVID-19 regulations, guidance and other government actions. The updates below are the latest guidance and other developments since May 1<sup>st</sup> to help mitigate

the impacts of COVID-19. For earlier COVID-19 regulations and guidance, visit the previous [Policy Briefs](#).

### **FDA Authorizes Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for Emergency Use in Adolescents**

- The FDA has [expanded](#) the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to include adolescents 12 through 15 years of age.

### **CMS Expanding Efforts to Grow COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence and Protect Residents**

- CMS has [issued a rule](#) that will ensure long-term care and residential facilities serving clients with intellectual disabilities educate and offer COVID-19 vaccines to residents, clients and staff

### **HHS to Enforce Prohibition on Sex and Gender-Identity Discrimination**

HHS has [announced](#) that its Office for Civil Rights will interpret and enforce Section 1557 and Title IX's prohibitions on discrimination based on sex to include discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. In his statement, Secretary Becerra articulated why he believes this to be critical to community health, saying "Fear of discrimination can lead individuals to forgo care, which can have serious negative health consequences. It is the position of the Department of Health and Human Services that everyone—including LGBTQ people—should be able to access health care, free from discrimination or interference, period."

### **A Look at the Federal Register**

### **The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Request for Information for Methods and Leading Practices for Advancing Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through Government**

The OMB has published an RFI to identify effective methods for assessing whether agency policies and actions equitably serve all eligible individuals and communities, particularly those that are currently and historically underserved. To read the RFI click [HERE](#) | To read an Overview of the RFI click [HERE](#).



## AHPA Resources

### Rule Summary: IPPS FY 2022

- [IPPS FY 2022 Proposed Rule](#)

*AHPA is hosting a webinar on **Friday, June 4<sup>th</sup>** to discuss the top proposals included in this year's rule. Invitation to follow.*

**Need an easy way to keep tabs on President Biden's Executive Orders?** AHPA is keeping a running list of the latest Executive Orders coming out of the White House. [Click here](#) to download.

## WHAT WE'RE READING...

[Some Parents Scramble for Teens' Vaccine Appointments, Others Wary](#) – Washington Post

[Charity Care Needs to Be Better Than This](#) – Health Affairs

[Uber, Lyft to Provide Free Rides to COVID-19 Vaccine Sites Until July 4](#) – Wall Street Journal

[HHS to Prohibit Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#) – Lexology