



HOW THE NEW HEALTH REFORM LAW WILL IMPROVE ACCESS TO CARE AND HELP ELIMINATE HEALTH DISPARITIES

Office of Minority Health

- The new law transfers the Office of Minority Health to the Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Services, to be headed by the Deputy Secretary for Minority Health. The Office will work to improve minority health and the quality of health care minorities receive, and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities. The Deputy Secretary will award grants, contracts, enter into memoranda of understanding, and agreements with public, nonprofit and private entities to assure improved health status of racial and ethnic minorities, and develop measures to evaluate the effectiveness of activities aimed at reducing health disparities and supporting local communities.
- Offices of Minority Health are also established in the following agencies within HHS: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; the Health Resources and Services Administration; the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; the Food and Drug Administration; and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.
- The new law also re-designates the *National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities* as the *National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities*. The Institute will have expanded research endowments.

Language Access

- The new law requires plans in state exchanges to provide information in plain language that the intended audience, including individuals with limited English proficiency, can readily understand.

National Strategy for Quality Improvement in Health Care

- HHS will establish a national strategy to improve delivery of health care services and patient health outcomes. Priorities will be placed in improving care for patients with high-cost chronic diseases; improving research and disseminating best practices to improve patient safety and reduce medical errors, health care-associated infections, preventable admissions and readmissions, and reduce health disparities across populations and geographic areas.

Workforce Diversity Grants

- The new law expands the allowable uses of nursing diversity grants to include completion of associate degrees and advanced degrees in nursing.

State Grants to Health Care Providers who Treat Underserved Populations

- The new law establishes state grant programs for health care providers who treat a high percentage of medically underserved or other special populations in the state.

Oral Healthcare Prevention Activities

- The new law establishes an Oral Healthcare Prevention Education Campaign. The activities will be targeted toward specific populations, including children, pregnant women, individuals with disabilities, and ethnic and racial minorities.

Training in General, Pediatric, and Public Health Dentistry

- HHS will make grants available for collaborative projects between departments of primary care medicine and departments of general, pediatric and public health dentistry. Priority will be made in awarding grants to those with a record of training individuals from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds, underrepresented minorities; or applicants that have a high rate for placing graduates in practice settings that serve health disparity populations; and those who train providers to care for children, older adults, homeless persons, victims of abuse or trauma, person with mental health or substance abuse disorders.

Health Professions Training for Diversity

- The Department of Health and Human Services will provide scholarships for disadvantaged students who commit to work in medically underserved areas as primary care providers and expands loan repayment for individuals who will serve as faculty in eligible institutions. Includes faculty at schools for physician assistants as eligible for loan repayment.

School-based Health Centers

- The new law establishes a \$50 million grant program over the next five years for eligible entities to support the operation of school-based health centers. Preference will be given to centers that serve a large population of medically underserved children.

Creating Healthier Communities

- The new law establishes Community Transformation Grants that would be awarded to state and local government agencies and community-based organizations for the implementation of preventive health activities that would address health disparities, reduce chronic disease rates, and prevent the development of secondary conditions. Grants would be used to develop a Community Transformation Plan that includes the policy, environmental, programmatic, and infrastructure changes necessary to promote healthy living and reduce disparities. Activities will include: creating healthier environments, creating infrastructure to support activity; developing programs to target a variety of age levels; prioritizing strategies to reduce racial and ethnic disparities, including social, economic, and geographic determinants of health, and addressing special populations' needs.