

California One of Several States CMS Approved for Medicaid to Cover Traditional Health Care Practices

Health Equity

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On October 16, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) [approved](#) 1115 demonstrations for Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Oregon expanding their Medicaid and CHIP covered services to include traditional health care practices provided by Indian Health Services facilities, Tribal facilities, and urban Indian organizations. Recognizing the importance of traditional health care practices to American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations, CMS hopes this policy effort will improve access to culturally appropriate and quality health care in Tribal communities. AI/AN populations experience significantly worse health disparities compared to the general population, including higher rates of diabetes, obesity, cancer, substance use disorder (SUD) and other mental illnesses. Studies have shown that traditional health care practices, including traditional healers and natural helpers, can improve the health outcomes for individuals facing these challenges. In particular, recognizing the fact that Native American populations are disproportionately affected by the opioid epidemic, [Medi-Cal](#) has announced that it will place a particular emphasis on traditional health care practices that have proven successful in treating SUD.