

HLB's Health Equity Essentials Update

Insights

06.03.25

On behalf of the Hooper, Lundy & Bookman, P.C. Health Equity Task Force, here is our most recent HLB Health Equity Essentials Update.

MAKE OUR CHILDREN HEALTHY AGAIN REPORT RELEASED

A [newly issued report](#) from the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission, spearheaded by Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F Kennedy, Jr., points to such factors as poor diet, accumulation of environmental toxins, low physical activity, chronic stress, and overmedicalization as contributing to chronic diseases plaguing children in the United States. At its core, the Commission emphasizes the need for adequate access to nutritious and uncontaminated food. The Commission's next step is to produce the Make Our Children Healthy Again Strategy by August of this year, based upon the findings from the Assessment. Following its release, there have been [reports](#) that the MAHA Report included several false citations. The MAHA Report was subsequently updated to correct several citations but there are [allegations](#) that the updated MAHA Report still contains errors.

HHS PUBLISHES REPORT ON PEDIATRIC GENDER AFFIRMING CARE

On May 1, HHS released its [Treatment for Pediatric Gender Dysphoria: Review of Evidence and Best Practices](#), concluding "that many U.S. medical professionals and associations have fallen short of their duty to prioritize the health interests of young patients" in treating minors with gender dysphoria. In response, the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) and the US Professional Association for Transgender Health (USPATH) issued a [critique](#) of the report the very next day. In particular, WPATH emphasizes the need for ongoing research into outcomes for transgender children alongside with making developmentally appropriate clinical services available. WPATH posits that ceasing research funding and blocking gender affirming interventions are a threat to the health and dignity of transgender children. This Report is one of many actions various federal agencies have taken related to gender-affirming care for minors. For instance, on April 22, 2025, Attorney General Pam Bondi issued a memorandum directing the Department of Justice (DOJ) to investigate providers of gender-affirming care to minors. (See our discussion of the Memo [here](#).) Following the release of the Gender Dysphoria Report, HHS sent a [letter](#) to health care providers, risk managers, and medical boards noting HHS' expectation that providers would review the Gender Dysphoria Report and "make the necessary updates to ... treatment protocols and training..." while CMS sent [letters](#) to "select hospitals" requesting information on "medical interventions for gender dysphonia in children."

WASHINGTON STATE HEALTH GROUPS SUE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OVER REMOVAL OF CRITICAL HEALTH CARE DATA AND WEBSITES

PROFESSIONAL



MARTHA P. CRAMER
Associate
Washington, D.C.



COLE M. HOYT
Associate
Los Angeles



SANDI KRUL
Partner
Los Angeles



BENJAMIN Y. LIN
Associate
San Francisco



ALICIA MACKLIN
Partner
Los Angeles



MONICA MASSARO
Director, Government
Relations & Public Policy
Washington, D.C.



IAN FALEFUAFUA TAPU
Associate
Los Angeles

Nine health professional organizations, including the Washington State Medical Association, [filed a federal lawsuit](#) in Washington on May 20 to stop the federal government from deleting crucial public health data and to restore deleted websites, including information that was made publicly available on HHS's and its affiliated agencies' websites. The targeted data includes information related to pregnancy risks, public health datasets, and information about opioid-use disorder. The plaintiffs claim that this data is imperative for physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals to make informed clinical evidence-based decisions in providing care, as well as by public health officials and scientific researchers. The complaint alleges that the Trump administration's actions are "arbitrary, capricious and unreasoned."

SAMOA FIRST PACIFIC ISLAND NATION TO DEVELOP A NAPHS

[Samoa's National Action Plan for Health Security \(NAPHS\)](#) was established in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO). It provides a national roadmap that sets priorities and outlines the steps required to strengthen the island nation's ability to prevent, detect, and respond to public health threats, such as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The NAPHS will promote collaboration across sectors and communities, solidifying priorities to better understand where to allocate resources.

ICD-10-CM "Z CODES" FOR SDOH REMAIN MOSTLY UNTAPPED

In FY 2016, the Tenth Revision to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems introduced [Z codes](#) to document social determinants of health (SDOH) among patients seeking care. Based upon a [study](#) of commercial claims processed from 2016 to 2022 and published in the May 2025 edition of Health Affairs, it is clear that the codes are not used with any consistency across patient demographics and adoption of Z codes in general continues lagging.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION BILL PASSES HOUSE WITH LARGE MEDICAID IMPACT

On May 22, the House of Representatives narrowly passed its [budget reconciliation](#) legislation seeking to extend tax cuts and other parts of the Administration's agenda while significantly cutting government spending on other programs, specifically Medicaid. [Medicaid provisions](#) in the bill include new work requirements, limiting states' use of the provider tax under the Medicaid program, increasing Medicaid eligibility verification and reducing the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for Medicaid Expansion states who use their program to provide health care for undocumented immigrants, among other things. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) that the House bill would reduce Medicaid spending by \$625 billion and that 7.6 million people in the United States will lose health insurance by 2034. While Senate Republican leadership has made a goal of passing its version of legislation by July 4, there are already Republican challenges to the House-passed bill as well as Senate parliamentary requirements that could significantly alter provisions.