

HLB's Health Equity Essentials Blog

Insights

02.25.26

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

ICE Enforcement Activities are Impeding Immigrants from Seeking Necessary Medical Care

Health systems and physicians are [reporting](#) concerns that crackdowns by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), particularly in metropolitan areas, such as Minneapolis, are making immigrants afraid to leave their home. This fear has led to a significant increase in missed medical appointments and fewer vaccines administered to immigrant populations. Some providers are turning to telehealth and even in-home visits to provide necessary care. In a recent [press conference](#) held in Minnesota, physicians described instances of adults and children foregoing care, which can result in worse and costlier health outcomes. The [American Medical Association \(AMA\)](#) expressed serious concerns with ICE enforcement activities in and around hospitals, saying these actions are preventing immigrants from seeking vital medical care.

ACA Marketplace Lapses in Coverage Spell Financial Trouble for Many Hospitals

A new [Fitch Ratings report](#) foreshadows that many hospitals in states that did not expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will likely see a surge of uninsured patients. This is because, starting Jan. 1, 2026, enhanced premium tax credits expired, making Marketplace plans no longer financially feasible for such individuals. Limited Medicaid eligibility and lack of safety-net and other government subsidized backstop programs in many of these states is expected to exacerbate the problem.

Recent Study Found That More Than 25% of Medicaid Enrolled Physicians Never Saw a Single Medicaid Patient

A study published in [Health Affairs](#) found that a significant number of physicians enrolled in Medicaid never see a Medicaid patient – so-called “ghost” physicians. The research indicated participation in Medicaid varied widely by specialty. For example, more than 40% of psychiatrists were “ghost” physicians who saw no Medicaid enrollees in a given year, in contrast to primary care physicians, who were most likely to be high-volume “core” Medicaid participants. Other [research](#) has noted that Medicaid enrollees have a disproportionately higher need for mental health services compared to the overall patient population, which makes this statistic even more daunting.

CDC Delivers \$82.5M in Funds to Strengthen Health Care Delivery to AI/AN Tribes

Entering into the third year of a 5-year [cooperative agreement](#) executed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) tribes across the country have received \$82.5 million in funding to

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strengthen the performance, quality, and infrastructure of their tribal public health systems. The funds enable recipient tribes to improve their capacity to implement, develop, and evaluate public health programs and services for their communities.

HHS Maintains Funds and Includes Health Extenders in New Spending Bill Legislation

On Feb. 3, the President signed into law a [funding bill](#) that largely left intact the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) FY 2025 budget heading into FY 2026. Notably, the bill also included extensions for several [expiring health care provisions](#) including telehealth waivers, delay of Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) cuts, extension of community health center funding, and the hospital at home program.

Recent Legal Developments in California for Gender-Affirming Care

On Jan. 2, the Department of Justice (DOJ) reached an [agreement](#) with families who sued over DOJ's subpoena of medical and personal information for more than 3,000 pediatric patients seeking transgender care from Children's Hospital Los Angeles. Under the agreement, the DOJ must provide advanced notice if it seeks these records prior to Feb. 1, 2029. Later in January, the California Attorney General (AG) filed a [lawsuit](#) against Rady Children's Health located in San Diego, alleging that Rady violated its commitment to continue providing gender-affirming care to its pediatric patients through 2034. The agreement was one of the requirements the AG's office placed upon Rady in approving its merger with Children's Hospital of Orange County in Nov. 2024.

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