

HHS/CMS Advances Equity Agenda: Policy Themes and Implementation Plans



May 2022 Update

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Key Milestones as Administration, HHS, CMS Integrate Advancing Equity into Policies

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Jan 2021

Aug 2021

Sept 2021

Nov 2021

- **1/20 [EO 13985](#)**. Federal Government laid out comprehensive plan to advance equity for all
- **1/21 [EO 13995](#)**. Focused on impact of COVID-19 on underserved populations; established COVID-19 HETF
- **8/6 [OMB: Study to Identify Methods to Assess Equity: Report to the President](#)**. Assess whether an agency's policies and actions create or exacerbate barriers to full/equal participation in gov programs
- **9/9 [Strategic Vision for CMS](#)**. First of six strategic pillars is "Advance health equity by addressing the health disparities that underlie our health system"
- **11/10 HHS [COVID-19 HETF Final Recommendations & Implementation Plan](#)**. Prioritized recommendations to drive change; guidance to federal agencies and action steps to support agency action plans

Mar 2022

Apr 2022

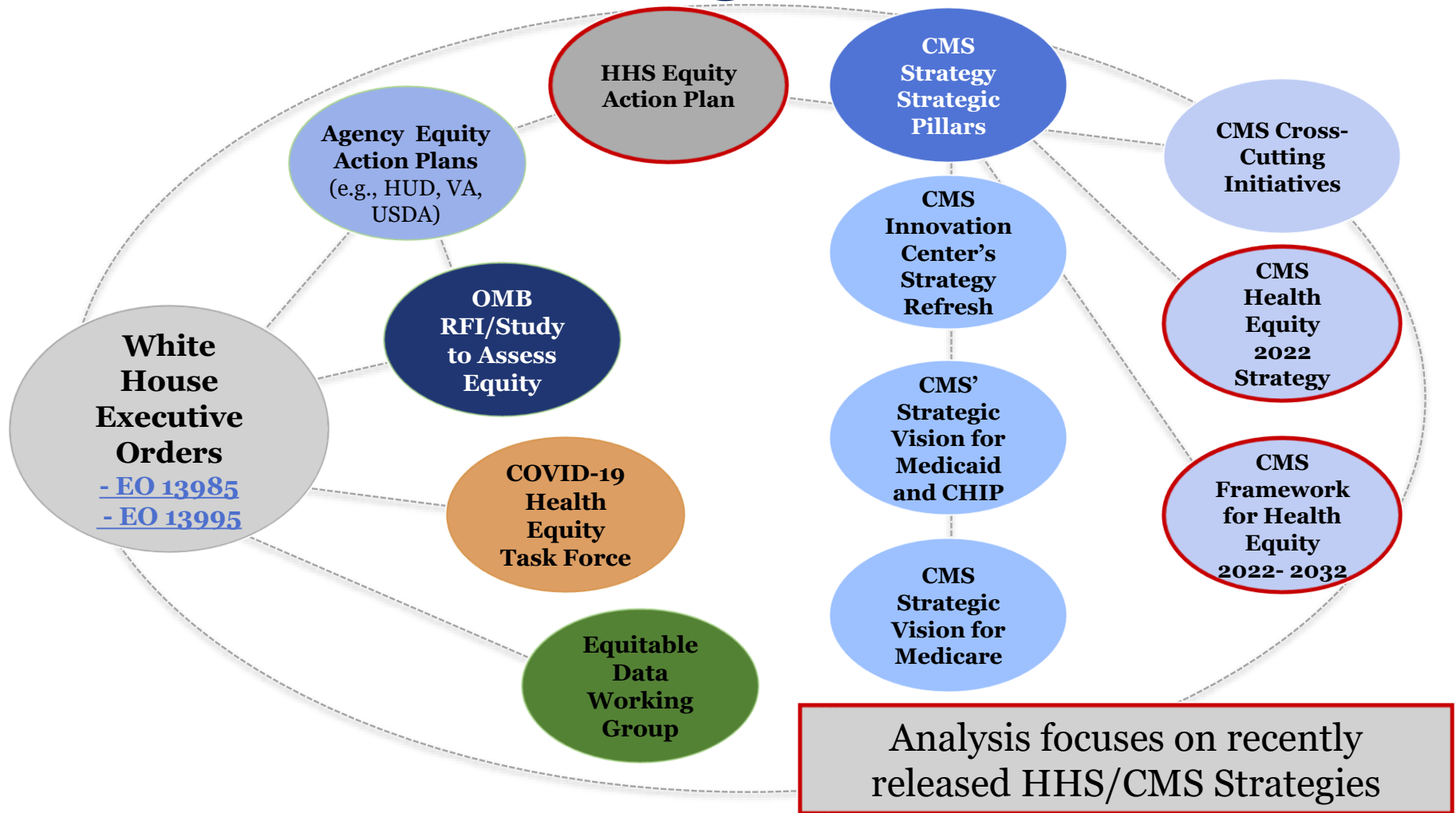
Summer/Fall 2022

- **3/1 [White House Unity Agenda](#)**. Outlined in State of the Union includes mental health strategy
- **4/14 [Agency Equity Action Plans](#)**. Federal Agencies outlined commitment; strategies to embed equity, racial justice, gender equality into work
- **4/15 [CMS Cross-Cutting Initiatives](#)**. Initiatives driving CMS' strategic vision to advance health equity, expand coverage, & improve health outcomes
- **4/20 [CMS 2022 Health Equity Strategy](#)**. Outlined equity goals for each CMS Office
- **4/22 [CMS Framework for Health Equity 2022- 2032](#)**. Framework will inform policies and programs to support health for all served by CMS

Stakeholder Engagement Summer 2022

Executive Orders Lay Groundwork for Administration's Equity Agenda

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Analysis Focuses on HHS/CMS Strategies Released in April 2022

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- Federal Agency Equity Plans**. White House released over 90 federal agencies' first-ever Equity Action Plans. Plans outline more than 300 strategies and commitments to address systemic barriers within policies and programs
 - HHS' Equity Action Plan**. Plan outlines actions that HHS can take now and ways the department can work in the future to advance equity such as through strategies to build data capacity, expand stakeholder engagement, and identify the root cause of inequities
- CMS Health Equity 2022 Strategy**. Strategy outlines CMS' focus on addressing health disparities across all CMS Offices' work. Follows CMS Administrator's **strategic vision**, which includes advancing health equity as first of six pillars
- CMS Framework for Health Equity 2022- 2032**. Framework reinforces the concept that in order to attain the highest level of health for all people, there needs to be a focus on addressing avoidable inequalities and eliminating health and health care disparities. This updates previous Medicare-only focused equity plan with a comprehensive 10-year approach to embed health equity across Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, and the Health Insurance Marketplaces

Priority Areas & Themes of HHS/CMS Strategies to Advance Equity

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Coverage & Access

- Medicaid, Medicare, Marketplaces
- Maternal and Child Health
 - Rural Health
 - Behavioral Health
- Culturally/linguistically appropriate services

Data & Quality Measurement

- Collection
- Reporting
- Stratification

Addressing Social Determinants of Health

Stakeholder Outreach & Engagement

- Focused on those historically excluded

Grants, Funding & Contracting

Capacity & Workforce / Reducing Administrative Burden

HHS and CMS committed to stakeholder input, with particular interest on key areas. Stakeholders should continue to monitor range of opportunities to engage (e.g., comment on proposed rules/RFIs, convenings, grants, participating in initiatives).

HHS and CMS Detail Priorities on Equity

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- HHS Equity Action Plan
- CMS Health Equity 2022 Strategy
- CMS Framework for Health Equity 2022- 2032

HHS Equity Action Plan

Outlines Key Issues and Commitments

Challenge / Issue	Commitment
Maternal Health	Respond to national maternal morbidity and mortality crisis through working with states to extend postpartum coverage and identifying innovative ways to improve postpartum care
Language Barriers & Civil Rights	Address barriers that individuals with limited English proficiency face through expanding access to content (e.g., webpages, benefit information) and language services; investing in resources to advance civil rights; and clarifying and enforcing nondiscrimination provisions
Grants/Acquisitions	Support equity in grants through guidance in NOFOs aiming to increase opportunities for applicants from underserved communities
Contracting	Expand contracting opportunities for small, disadvantaged businesses including through training and outreach
Capacity Building	Implement data-informed assessments of major HHS policies and programs to identify disparities/inequities; deploy resources to address disparities

Plan focused on expanding access, incorporating previously underserved stakeholders, and increasing resources & supports

2022 CMS Health Equity Strategy Goals

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- **Close gaps in health care access, quality, and outcomes** for underserved populations
- **Promote culturally and linguistically appropriate services** to ensure understandable and respectful care / services that are responsive to preferred languages, health literacy, and communication needs
- **Build on outreach efforts** to enroll eligible people across Medicare, Medicaid/CHIP, and Marketplace
- **Expand and standardize the collection and use of data**, including race, ethnicity, preferred language, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, income, geography, and other factors
- **Evaluate policies to determine how CMS can support safety net providers**, partner with providers caring in underserved communities, and ensure care is accessible
- **Ensure engagement with and accountability to communities CMS serves** in policy development and implementation of programs
- **Incorporate screening for and promote broader access to health-related social needs**, including greater adoption of quality measures, coordination with community-based organizations, and collection of social needs data in standardized formats across programs & activities
- **Ensure CMS programs serve as a model and catalyst to advance health equity** through nation's health care system, including with states, providers, plans, and other stakeholders
- **Promote the highest quality outcomes and safest care for all people** through use of the framework under the CMS National Quality strategy

Strategy prioritizes access and coverage, outcomes, engagement, and data collection and use

Strategy to Advance Equity Extends Across Offices; Focused on Partnering, Engaging with Stakeholders

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- **2022 Health Equity Strategy will drive work across centers and offices.** CMS [outlines](#) how health equity will play key role across offices and centers including:
 - Center for Medicare (CM)
 - Center for Medicaid & CHIP (CMCS)
 - Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO)
 - Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI)
 - Center for Clinical Standards and Quality (CCSQ)
- **Strategy focused on building partnerships across health care sector.** Work will include collaborating and sharing best practices across states, health care facilities, providers, insurance companies, manufacturers, people with lived experience, researchers, and others
- **CMS soliciting equity commitment from health care leaders.** Health care leaders encouraged to echo CMS' commitments to advance health equity through
 - Designing, implementing, and operationalizing initiatives that support health
 - Eliminating avoidable differences in outcomes experienced by disadvantaged/underserved people
 - Providing the care and support people—particularly those with Medicare, Medicaid or Marketplace coverage—need to thrive
- **Next Step - Convening industry stakeholders.** CMS will convene industry stakeholders, including health care facilities, insurance companies, state officials and providers
 - First convening in Summer 2022, focused on improving maternal health outcomes

Framework for Health Equity Focused on Data, Capacity Building, Access, and Addressing Disparities

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- **Framework Includes five health equity priorities for reducing disparities:**
 - **Priority 1:** Expand the Collection, Reporting, and Analysis of Standardized Data
 - **Priority 2:** Assess Causes of Disparities Within CMS Programs and Address Inequities in Policies and Operations to Close Gaps
 - **Priority 3:** Build Capacity of Health Care Organizations and the Workforce to Reduce Health and Health Care Disparities
 - **Priority 4:** Advance Language Access, Health Literacy, Provision of Culturally Tailored Services
 - **Priority 5:** Increase All Forms of Accessibility to Health Care Services and Coverage

CMS Framework Outlines 10-year Approach to Embed Health Equity Across CMS Programs

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- **CMS updates previous equity plan to expand beyond Medicare.** [Framework for Health Equity 2022–2032](#) includes comprehensive, 10-year approach to embed health equity across Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, and the Health Insurance Marketplaces
- **Includes focus on disparities in chronic diseases.** Framework includes focus on disparities related to chronic and infectious diseases (e.g., diabetes, chronic kidney disease, cancer, dementia, cardiovascular disease, maternal/ infant health, behavioral health, COVID-19)
- **Framework will inform policy and program development, health care stakeholder engagement.** Outlines how CMS will use policy levers, program authorities and engagement of health care stakeholders across settings, communities

Implications/What to Watch For

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Opportunities for Stakeholder Engagement as CMS/HHS Implement Newly Outlined Strategic Plans

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- **Policy levers impact range of industry, patient, and other stakeholders.** Initiatives have widespread implications across stakeholders: beneficiaries, health systems, providers, health plans, manufacturers, and states
- **Stakeholder input is emphasis of HHS/CMS Centers and Offices.**
 - Feedback across stakeholders informing strategies and frameworks
 - CMS interested in stakeholders' perspectives on priority issues
- **Targeted engagement in Summer 2022.** CMS initially focused on maternal health outcomes
- **Policy vehicles.** Stakeholders' opportunities for feedback/engagement with HHS/CMS' strategies
 - Listening sessions
 - Regulations and guidance
 - Requests for Information
 - Grant/Funding Opportunities
 - Programs (e.g., ACO REACH, quality measurement)
 - Cross-cutting initiatives
 - Technical assistance