

PUBLICATION

HHS to Provide Roadmap for Behavioral Health Integration

Authors: Katherine A. Denney, Bahati Mutisya, Matthew W. Wolfe
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On September 14, 2022, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) published its Roadmap for Behavioral Health Integration outlining how HHS plans to advance President Biden's national strategy to address mental and substance use disorders. The HHS publication follows the HHS National Tour to Strengthen Mental Health, through which U.S. HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra received feedback from patients and providers across the country. The HHS publication reports that HHS aims to provide a "full spectrum of integrated" care to the population it serves, has "evaluated key barriers to transforming behavioral health care," and will advance three pillars in President Biden's national strategy to address our national mental health crisis – to 1) Strengthen System Capacity, 2) Connect Americans to Care, and 3) Support Americans by Creating Healthy Environments. Here is an overview of how HHS plans to advance these three pillars.

Strengthen System Capacity

For HHS, strengthening system capacity will mean addressing workforce challenges and adopting new technologies through HHS programs that a) "*recruit, train, and support* a diverse workforce" that is fully integrated, as well as culturally and linguistically appropriate, and b) use new technologies to increase "*integration, coordination, and consultation*" across diverse settings. Examples include:

- The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program that trains primary care residents to treat the physical and mental health needs of rural and underserved communities.
- New Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) billing codes for "monthly care integration" of mental health services led by clinical psychologists or clinical social workers.

Connect Americans to Care

HHS efforts to address this pillar focus on insurance and other financing limitations, and the inequitable engagement of underserved populations. HHS is prioritizing policies that strive to make behavioral health services more *affordable* and engage in *targeted outreach* to the needs of high-risk populations. Examples include:

- Medicaid coverage of "interdisciplinary whole-person care" and testing of other payment models that will encourage behavioral health integration.
- The HRSA Health Care for the Homeless program to support "coordinated, comprehensive, integrated" primary care for homeless patients.

Support Americans by Creating Health Environments

HHS is focused on addressing a lack of "culturally relevant, person-centered, and evidence-based" promotion of prevention services by aligning structural supports and financing to integrate these programs into community-based settings. Examples include:

- The What Works in Schools Program launched by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which supports health education in schools and connecting students with health services.
- The HRSA Bright Futures program, which provides guidelines on improving the health of infants, children, and adolescents.

HHS will closely monitor the progress of its programs in achieving the president's policy pillars and will continue to further develop and announce policies in line with the HHS Roadmap.

If you have any questions about the HHS Roadmap, please contact [Katherine Denney](#), [Bahati Mutisya](#), [Heather Alleva](#), [Matthew Wolfe](#), or any member of Baker Donelson's [Health Law](#) team.