



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)
Office of Behavioral Health, Disability, and Aging Policy (BHDAP)

To our partners in research and policy analysis:

I am delighted to share with you BHDAP's first newsletter of 2024! As you will see below, in recent months our team has published a report to Congress on improving access to [contingency management for treating substance use disorders](#). We also added three reports to our set on the [direct care workforce](#); these reports examine state policy efforts to improve wages for direct care workers, a major focus of the Biden-Harris Administration's [Executive Order](#) on Increasing Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers. In December, we released the annual update to the [National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease](#). BHDAP also carried out research on topics such as the relationship between [nursing home ownership](#) and quality of care, [health information technology](#) in long-term care, and the prevalence of [substance use disorders by race and ethnicity](#).

BHDAP researchers and leaders, in partnership with other colleagues in HHS and the Department of Education, supported the development of a [joint Policy Statement](#) on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs. Additionally, BHDAP presented research at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) 2023 [National Telehealth Conference](#).

We thank you for your partnership and interest in our work!

Dr. Tisamarie Sherry, Deputy Assistant Secretary

Please share with interested colleagues and/or subscribe below to receive these and other updates from BHDAP.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Contingency Management for the Treatment of Substance Use Disorders: Enhancing Access, Quality, and Program Integrity for an Evidence-Based Intervention

(posted November 14, 2023)

[Read Report](#)

Expanding access to high-quality contingency management for the treatment of substance use disorder represents an important opportunity to accelerate efforts to address the overdose crisis, as well as the other substantial public health harms and costs related to untreated substance use disorders. This report to Congress, as required by Section 4127 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, discusses opportunities and considerations for entities overseeing contingency management implementation to promote access to this intervention while ensuring fidelity to evidence-based practices, care quality, and program integrity.

Trends in Ownership Structures of U.S. Nursing Homes and the Relationship with Facility Traits and Quality of Care (2013-2022) *(posted November 15, 2023)*

[Read Brief](#)

The role of ownership has been a longstanding concern in the nursing home (NH) sector, especially around the role for-profit companies in providing care. Investment by private equity (PE) firms and real estate investment trusts (REITs) especially has sparked recent scrutiny over concerns on the potential impact on NH quality, further fueled by the presence of complex ownership structures and challenges in ensuring ownership transparency. This study examined PE, REIT, and chain ownership trends.

Substance Use and Substance Use Disorders by Race and Ethnicity, 2015-2019

(posted November 21, 2023)

[Read Brief](#)

This brief assesses whether and how rates of substance use and substance use disorder (SUD) among adults (ages 18 and older) differ by race and ethnicity. The authors combine five years of data, 2015-2019, from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) to create sample sizes large enough to examine specific racial and ethnic groups for specific categories of drug use. Understanding substance use and SUD by race and ethnicity is critical to informing equitable policy and culturally effective prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts that can help address disparities in health and well-being.

Behavioral Health Diagnoses and Treatment Services for Children Involved with the Child Welfare System *(posted November 8, 2023)*

[Read Brief](#)

In partnership with ASPE's Office of Human Services Policy, we use claims data from the Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Programs to examine the behavioral health diagnoses and treatment services received by children and youth involved with the child welfare system in 2019. Nationally, more than 40 percent of children involved with the child welfare system had been diagnosed with such conditions and they used behavioral health treatment services at rates several times the levels of children and youth in other eligibility groups.

National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease: 2023 Update *(posted December 12, 2023)*

[Read Report](#)

Through the National Plan, HHS and its federal partners work to improve the trajectory of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research, support people living with dementia and their caregivers, and encourage action to reduce risk factors.

Health Information Technology Adoption and Utilization in Long-Term and Post-Acute Care Settings *(posted December 18, 2023)*

[Read Brief](#)

This paper provides an overview of Health Information Technology (HIT) adoption and utilization in long-term and post-acute care (LTPAC) settings. This study found that LTPAC have adopted electronic health records (EHRs) to support clinical and business needs. Interoperable exchange of health information however is not routine or widely used. LTPAC providers utilize their EHR, but modernization remain slow without focused policy levers. Despite barriers, there are opportunities for emerging policies to support interoperability in LTPAC.

State Efforts to Coordinate Provider Directory Accuracy *(posted January 10, 2024)*

[Read Report](#)

This study focused on how states may coordinate one type of solution to improve the accuracy of health plan provider directories: a centralized provider directory. To learn from states' experiences with centralized provider directories, the study team conducted an environmental scan of peer-reviewed journal articles, other reports published by governmental and private entities, and government and industry websites, interviewed key informants, and developed case studies of California and Michigan.

Direct Care Worker Wages *(posted January 16, 2024)*

[Landing Page](#)

Direct care workers (DCWs) such as nursing assistants, home health aides, and personal care assistants play an essential role in the health and well-being of over 20 million Americans. Yet DCW wages are not enough to make jobs competitive with entry level positions in other industries with similar job requirements which exacerbates the challenges in recruitment and retention of these workers. Many DCWs are lost to other sectors that offer similar wages but more flexible schedules, more hours, and other benefits. Some states have tried to address these issues by implementing policies aimed at improving DCW wages. The purpose of this study was to explore state policies for improving compensation for DCWs, the key elements of policies, and the results of those policies.

State Efforts to Improve Direct Care Workforce Wages: State Case Studies

[Read Report](#)

Direct Care Workforce Experienced Limited Wage Improvements Despite State Policy Efforts

[Read Brief](#)

State Efforts to Improve Direct Care Workforce Wages

[Read Report](#)

BHDAP IN ACTION

BHDAP leadership and researchers contributed to webinars, conferences, and panel discussions, and worked with our federal partners to support cross-agency collaborations:

Long-Term Care Policy Conference

BHDAP leadership participated in a [panel discussion](#) during the Gateway to Global Aging Data's *Long-Term Care Policy Conference*. The panel focused on the state of long-term care (LTC) in the US and internationally. Panelists covered such topics as LTC benefits currently covered by Medicaid, the coverage of home and community-based services (HCBS) under Medicaid via state flexibilities, the cost of LTC, and the challenges faced by the home care workforce.

Exploring Life Expectancy

BHDAP leadership also participated in [The Forgotten Middle: Exploring Life Expectancy Outcomes among the Lower-Middle Class](#), a panel held by the Urban Institute. The panel discussed the causes of and potential policy solutions for the shorter life expectancy and greater health and economic challenges experienced by lower-middle class Americans in comparison to upper-middle class Americans.

President Biden's Care Executive Order

BHDAP collaborated with HHS partners and the Department of Labor to stand up a workgroup in response to President Biden's [Executive Order on Increasing Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers](#). The Executive Order recognized the need for better data on this workforce to improve their job quality and help inform policies and practices, and tasked HHS and the Labor Department with analyzing existing data and identifying opportunities for improving data and knowledge about the workforce. [The workgroup](#) is currently meeting to identify key priorities, review existing data sources, and recommend ways to fill critical gaps in knowledge. This effort has been driven by a focus on policy--what data do we need to support the workforce, meet growing demand, and improve access to high quality services--and how we track the impacts of policy changes over time.

HHS-DoE Early Childhood Programs

ASPE Offices of BHDAP and Human Services Policy (HSP) researchers contributed to the development of a joint [HHS-Department of Education Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs](#). The Policy Statement builds upon the 2015 policy statement with renewed commitment and urgency as children with disabilities continue to face significant barriers accessing and participating in inclusive early childhood programs. It is targeted at States, local educational agencies, schools, early intervention providers, and early childhood programs.

National Telehealth Conference

At the HRSA 2023 [National Telehealth Conference](#), researchers from BHDAP and from ASPE's Office of Health Policy presented *HHS/ASPE Research on Telehealth During the COVID-19 Pandemic - Medicare Telehealth, Tele-Behavioral Health, and Telerehabilitation Services*. The presentation highlighted BHDAP research on telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic, including tele-behavioral health service use by Medicare beneficiaries, mental health service utilization by Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries, and the use of telerehabilitation for physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language therapy in nursing homes.

Housing & Services Partnership

BHDAP worked with its [Housing and Services Resource Center](#) partners to develop, roll out, and facilitate the [Housing and Services Partnership Accelerator](#) (HSPA). HSPA is a 12-month technical assistance program that leverages federal collaboration to support selected states by providing them with individualized technical assistance and the opportunity to learn from peer states through facilitated sharing of information, resources, best practices, and lessons learned. It seeks to help states accelerate and improve their service delivery and effectiveness at reducing potentially avoidable, high-cost services such as emergency room visits and institutional care and to improve physical and mental health outcomes for Medicaid beneficiaries. Eight states and DC were selected to participate in HSPA, which is currently underway.

Interagency Council on Homelessness

In collaboration with staff from the *U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness* (USICH), BHDAP and HSP organized the [February 2024 meeting of the Council](#), the first meeting with HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra serving as Council Chair. BHDAP served as direct support to Secretary Becerra in preparing for the event. The meeting focused on innovative state and local efforts to meet the needs of people experiencing both homelessness and mental health or substance use disorders.

Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care, and Services

BHDAP led the [first quarterly meeting](#) of the *NAPA Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care, and Services*. During the meeting, the Advisory Council heard updates from the field on implementation of disease-modifying therapies for Alzheimer's disease and outstanding research questions. A panel presented the latest research on diagnosis and development of treatments for other populations and causes of dementia.

Links and references to information from non-governmental organizations are provided for informational purposes and are not HHS endorsement, recommendation, or preference for the non-governmental organizations.

Past Newsletters are available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/bhdap-newsletters>.

WHO WE ARE: ASPE is the principal advisor to the Secretary of HHS on policy development, including major activities in policy coordination, legislative development, policy research, program evaluation, and economic analysis. Within ASPE, BHDAP focuses on policies and programs that support the independence, productivity, health and well-being of people with disabilities, people with behavioral health conditions, and older adults, including those with long-term care needs.

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