August 13: The Academy submitted comments in response to the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) proposed rule "Nondiscrimination in Health and Health Education Programs or Activities" expressing concern regarding the significant implications it will have on individuals' timely access to comprehensive health care services. This rule as proposed would weaken or eliminate protections for our most vulnerable populations. Read the full comments here.

August 12: The Academy submitted comments in response to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services's (CMS) request for information on "Reducing Administrative Burden to Put Patients Over Paperwork." The Academy's comments applaud CMS's current efforts to reduce provider burden and offer recommendations to address barriers specific to the nursing profession, including removing credentialing and privileging barriers, removing costly physician supervision requirements, and reducing data entry and documentation burdens. Read the full comments here.

August 5: In the wake of two mass shootings less than 24 hours of each other, the Academy sent a letter to Congressional leadership, including Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), and Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), calling on them to act to prevent future gun violence. Specifically, the letter calls on the Senate to pass the Background Check Expansion Act (S. 42), a version of which has already passed the House. Read the full letter here.

August 5: The Academy sent a letter to Representative Raul Ruiz (D-CA) and to Senators Tom Udall (D-NM), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), and Sherrod Brown (D-OH) in support of the Humanitarian Standards to Individuals in Customs and Border Protection
Custody Act (H.R. 3239 / S. 2135). This legislation will ensure the health and safety of those detained at our southern border. Read the House and Senate letters.

August 5: The Academy also sent a letter to Representative Lauren Underwood (D-IL) in support of the U.S. Border Patrol Medical Screening Standards Act (H.R. 3525) that would require an efficient medical screening upon detention at the border. Read the letter here.

Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC)

- MedPAC released its 2019 data book on health care spending and the Medicare program. The publication provides data on Medicare spending, demographics of the Medicare population, beneficiaries' access to care, and quality of care in the program. View the book here.

National Academy of Medicine (NAM)

- Future of Nursing 2020-2030 Town Hall Meetings
  - Seattle: The Committee hosted its third and final regional town hall meeting in Seattle on August 7th. Academy President Karen Cox was invited to discuss the Academy's work related to the theme, High Tech to High Touch.

- Philadelphia: The Committee hosted its second of three regional town hall meetings in Philadelphia on July 24th. Academy CEO Suzanne Miyamoto provided remarks on the Academy's work related to the theme, Payment and Care for Complex Health and Social Needs.
New NAM Publication: *A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty*

- This book reviews the research on linkages between child poverty and child well-being, and analyzes the poverty-reducing effects of major assistance programs directed at children and families.

**National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA, within National Institutes of Health)**

- **Helping End Addiction Long-Term (HEAL) Initiative: Justice Community Opioid Innovation Network (JCOIN) Awards**
  - Twelve grants will be awarded to form JCOIN to support research on quality addiction treatment for opioid use disorder in criminal justice settings nationwide. The awards total an estimated $155 million from NIDA to support the multi-year innovation network. Learn more [here](#).

**Administration Activities**

**Off the President's Desk**

- **Expanded Access to Preventive Care**
  - On July 18, the Trump Administration issued guidance that expands the flexibility of HSA-eligible high-deductible healthcare plans for individuals with chronic conditions. These types of healthcare plans will now be able to cover, before the deductible, important preventive medical services or devices such as insulin, inhalers, and statins.

**Around the Administration**

**Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)**

- **August 15: CMS is Bringing Health Plan Quality Ratings to All Exchanges**
  - CMS will require the display of the five-start Quality Rating System available nationwide for all health plans offered on the Health Insurance Exchanges beginning with the 2020 Open Enrollment Period.

- **August 5: CMS Announces New Standards for Medicaid DUR Programs to Combat Opioid Misuse and Abuse**
  - CMS released new guidance to states to promote proper use of prescription opioids by updating standard requirements for the Medicaid Drug Utilization Review (DUR) program. This guidance will help states implement new requirements under the SUPPORT Act.

- **July 29: New Support for Babies, Pregnant Women, and Mothers Affected by SUD**
  - CMS released two informational bulletins, *Caring Recovery for Infants and Babies (CRIB)* and *Help for Moms and Babies (HMB)*. These bulletins discuss provisions of the SUPPORT Act that provide new coverage options to state Medicaid programs to assist some of the most vulnerable beneficiaries with SUD.

- **Fact Sheet: Proposed Policy, Payment, and Quality Provisions Changes to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for Calendar Year 2020**

- **Workshop: CMS National Training Program**

**Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA)**
2018 Health Center Program Data
- The new Uniform Data System data show that health centers continue to provide increased access to high quality, value-based, comprehensive primary care for their communities, treating one in twelve people nationwide.

August 8: $400 Million Awarded to Combat the Opioid Crisis
- HRSA awarded nearly $400 million to enable community health centers, rural organizations, and academic institutions to establish and expand access to integrated substance use disorder and mental health services.

July 25: $42 Million to Expand Health Information Technology
- HRSA awarded nearly $42 million in funding to 49 Health Center Controlled Networks, enabling them to support 1,183 federally-funded health centers across all 50 states, DC, and Puerto Rico.

From the Federal Register

Final Rule

- CMS, HHS: Medicare Program; Prospective Payment System and Consolidated Billing for Skilled Nursing Facilities; Updates to Quality Reporting Program and Value-Based Purchasing Program for Federal Fiscal Year 2020
  - This final rule updates the payment rates used under the prospective payment system for skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) for federal fiscal year 2020. Additionally, the rule updates requirements for the SNF Quality Reporting Program and SNF Value-Based Purchasing Program.

Proposed Rules

- CMS, HHS: Medicare Program; Revisions to Payment Policies Under the Physician Fee Schedule and Other Changes
  - This rule proposes to revise payment policies under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, including proposals to implement measures within the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 and the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act. This proposed rule also addresses payment and scope of nonphysician providers treating patients with substance use disorder.

- VHA, VA: Center for Innovation for Care and Payment
  - The VA is proposing to amend its regulations that govern VA health care. This rule would establish parameters and authority for the new Center for Innovation for Care and Payment to test payment and service delivery models to reduce expenditures while preserving or enhancing the quality of care furnished by the VA.

Congressional Hearings

Based on previous positions taken by the Academy, the following scan is meant for informational purposes and does not directly translate to Academy endorsement. Links provided allow you to...
House Judiciary

- July 25: Oversight of Family Separation and U.S. Customs and Border Protection Short-Term Custody under the Trump Administration

House Oversight and Reform

- July 26: The Patient Perspective: The Devastating Impacts of Skyrocketing Drug Prices on American Families
- July 24 & 25: Examining JUUL’s Role in the Youth Nicotine Epidemic: Part I & Part II

House Veterans Affairs

- July 24: True Transparency? Assessing Wait Times Five Years After Phoenix

Senate Finance

- July 25: Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act of 2019
- July 23: Promoting Elder Justice: A Call for Reform

Senate Foreign Relations


Legislative Schedule

Both Chambers are in recess for the month of August for District Work Periods. The House and Senate are back in session on September 9.

Trouble Seeing This Message? View in Browser.