

COVID-ERA FLEXIBILITIES IN MEDICARE AND MEDICAID COULD ADVANCE PERSON-CENTERED CARE

*Experts Provide Framework to Support Policy Decisions
on the Future of Program Flexibilities*

Long Beach, CA, March 23, 2022—Older adults and people with complex needs have benefited from easier access to critical services and supports at home and in their community, such as telehealth, due to flexibilities in Medicare and Medicaid granted under the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). Now as regulations changed during the PHE are expiring, some person-centered care options might be at risk.

Researchers at Health Management Associates and Manatt Health, through support from The SCAN Foundation, found many of these flexibilities minimize administrative, clinical, and financial barriers while significantly advancing equitable care that could be elevated in the post-pandemic era.

Medicare provides coverage to more than 61 million older adults and younger people with disabilities, while Medicaid provides coverage to more than 76 million Americans, 12 million of whom are “dually eligible” and enrolled in both programs. Researchers say the PHE flexibilities had far-reaching effects on older adults and people with disabilities yet are still temporary and could end shortly after the PHE expires.

“Some of the temporary flexibilities granted during the pandemic sparked the most innovation in Medicare and Medicaid seen in decades,” said Dr. Sarita A. Mohanty, president & CEO of The SCAN Foundation. “When well implemented, enhancements to these two major government programs have the potential to advance equitable, person-centered, and community-focused care now and in the future.”

To help policymakers decide whether to make changes to the two programs permanent, researchers developed a framework for assessing the “person-centeredness” of the flexibilities (defined as care that is guided by an individual’s personal values and preferences and is designed to help people achieve what matters most to them). As policymakers make decisions about whether and which flexibilities should be made permanent through policy action, the framework helps policymakers make evidence-based choices.

“There are many COVID-19-related flexibilities related to telehealth, provider scope of practice, Medicare Advantage, and other areas that if made permanent, could make Medicare a more person-centered and equitable program,” said Jennifer Podulka, principal at Health Management Associates.

“Developing a person-centered framework to guide policymakers as they assess the impact of the temporary Medicare and Medicaid flexibilities has never been more important, particularly for the over 12 million people who are enrolled in both programs,” said Stephanie Anthony, senior advisor at Manatt Health. “We hope this framework

provides a tool for federal and state policymakers to assess opportunities for removing misalignments between Medicare and Medicaid programs that adversely impact individuals and providers participating in both programs.”

Their [joint issue brief](#) examines the benefits and risks of COVID-19 flexibilities, describes the person-centered assessment framework, and offers recommendations for flexibilities that could be considered for permanence. The [companion policymaker playbook](#) is an actionable guide for using the person-centered assessment framework and describes potential authorities for making flexibilities permanent.

On March 30, the Health Management Associates and Manatt Health researchers will discuss their recent work as well as options to maintain and strengthen the Medicare and Medicaid flexibilities for future generations. [Click here to register](#) for this upcoming webinar, to be hosted by the Alliance for Health Policy.

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About Health Management Associates

Health Management Associates (HMA) is an independent, national research and consulting firm specializing in publicly funded health care and human services policy, programs, financing, and evaluation. We serve government, public and private providers, health systems, health plans, community-based organizations, institutional investors, foundations, and associations. Every client matters. Every client gets our best. With more than 20 offices and over 400 multidisciplinary consultants coast to coast, our expertise, our services, and our team are always within client reach. For more information, visit <https://www.healthmanagement.com/>.

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Manatt Health integrates legal and consulting services to better meet the complex needs of clients across the health care system. Our diverse team of more than 160 attorneys and consultants from Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP, and its consulting subsidiary, Manatt Health Strategies, LLC, is passionate about helping our clients advance their business interests, fulfill their missions and lead health care into the future. For more information, visit <https://www.manatt.com/Health>.

About The SCAN Foundation

The SCAN Foundation is an independent public charity dedicated to creating a society where older adults can access health and supportive services of their choosing to meet their needs. Our mission is to advance a coordinated and easily navigated system of high-quality services for older adults that preserve dignity and independence. Learn more at <https://www.thescanfoundation.org/>.