



California Advocates Welcome Federal Plan To Deal With Disparities in Medicare

by David Gorn

Tuesday, September 15, 2015

The executive director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network said a new report from CMS addressing health disparities in Medicare will help to deal with barriers faced by racial and ethnic minorities, rural residents and the LGBT population.

"We are heartened to see CMS focus on the persistent disparities impacted by communities of color, the LGBT community, rural communities and persons with disabilities," said Sarah de Guia, CPEHN executive director.

"This information will provide us a path forward to understanding the impacts of health disparities and identify ways to reverse the inequities that result from them," de Guia said.

The Office of Minority Health report is the first federal plan to address the problem minority populations can have with more-limited access to Medicare services than experienced by mainstream patients.

The target communities include ethnic and racial minorities, the LGBT population, persons with disabilities and those who live in rural or underserved urban areas.

The plan sets six main priorities to reverse inequity in Medicare access to care and services:

- Expand data collection on health inequities among disadvantaged populations, including better reporting and analysis of data;
- Delineate the impact of disparities on those populations and make sure any solutions reach all parts of the CMS system;
- Disseminate any likely approaches to reducing health disparities within Medicare;
- Help health care providers meet the needs of those vulnerable populations;
- Address barriers due to limited English proficiency or disabilities; and
- Make health care facilities more physically accessible.

The plan, released by CMS last week, sets a four-year goal for reducing health disparities among the target populations.