



# Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness

**Monthly Policy Committee Meeting**  
October 2023

# Agenda

- Welcome
- Administration for Children and Families TANF Proposed Rule
- Policy and Legislative Updates
- CESIL Policy Committee Member Updates
- National Strategy for Social Connection Act sign on
- Closing & Next Steps

# **ACF Proposed Rule on TANF**

# ACF Proposed Rule to Amend the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program

- The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) [released](#) a proposed rule ([announcement](#)) to improve the effectiveness and integrity of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) regulations.
- The proposed rule puts forward for public comment seven changes to the current regulations that would strengthen TANF's safety net function, ease administrative burdens, and ultimately, improve TANF's ability to serve as a critical support to families experiencing economic hardship to achieve economic mobility.
- Comments on the proposed rule are Due December 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Seven Proposed Changes to TANF regulations:**

- Clarifying allowable expenditures by setting federal limits on how states define "needy" and clarifying "reasonably calculated to accomplish a TANF purpose."
- Excluding non-governmental 3<sup>rd</sup> party cash donations and the value of 3<sup>rd</sup>-party in-kind contributions as allowable TANF Maintenance of Effort expenditures.
- Adding Juneteenth as a federal holiday to count toward the work participation rate for work-eligible individuals in unpaid work activities.
- Developing new criteria for states to use alternative Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) measures.

## **Seven Proposed Changes to TANF regulations:**

- Clarifying criteria for reducing penalties in cases of non-compliance with work participation rates.
- Clarifying the distinction between program costs and administrative costs, particularly regarding the dissemination of program information.
- Ensuring compliance with the administrative cost cap of 15% set by the TANF statute. These changes aim to improve TANF's effectiveness and efficiency in supporting families experiencing economic hardship.

# **Policy and Legislative Updates**

# House Ways and Means RFI: Improving Access to Health Care in Rural and Underserved Areas

- The Coalition recently submitted a comment letter on the House Committee on Ways and Means' request for information seeking stakeholder input on addressing chronic disparities in access to health care in rural and underserved communities.
- The Committee is hoping to address issues related to healthcare facility closures, longer travel distances, and wait times as they are impacting patients nationwide due to a shrinking healthcare workforce, consolidation, and inconsistent financing.
- Information and recommendations from the Coalition related to:
  - expanding Medicare and Medicaid benefits;
  - transportation;
  - mental and behavioral health;
  - food and nutrition security;
  - employment; and
  - enhancing broadband infrastructure and connectivity



# Senators Launch Bipartisan Senate Mental Health Caucus

- Senators Alex Padilla (D-CA), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Joni Ernst (R-IA) have announced the formation of the [bipartisan Senate Mental Health Caucus](#)
- The caucus provides a platform for Senators to collaborate on 1) bipartisan legislation, 2) raise awareness of mental health issues, and 3) reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.
- The caucus will focus on 1) improving prevention and early intervention, 2) expanding the mental health workforce, 3) enhancing crisis response services, and 4) increasing access to evidence-based mental health treatment and solutions.
- For more information, see <https://www.padilla.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/padilla-tillis-smith-ernst-launch-bipartisan-senate-mental-health-caucus/>

## **National Organizations Release Framework to Support Public Health Leaders to Navigate the Promotion of Well-Being and Reduce Suicide**

- The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), and Mental Health America (MHA) released a framework for public health leaders with effective strategies to improve mental health and prevent suicide for all people.
- The framework is rooted in the values of social and institutional equity, research-informed actions, community-led solutions, and multi-sector partnerships.
- Using feedback from focus groups and input from partners, ASTHO, CDC, CLASP, and MHA have defined the role of public health across two categories:
  - Promoting mental health well-being by improving the essential conditions for health
  - Enhancing access to the supports and opportunities that provide care while reducing harm and isolation

# **SAMHSA Awards \$35M in Grants for Behavioral Health and HIV Care in Underserved Communities**

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [announced](#) nearly \$35 million to address health disparities specifically focused on bringing essential behavioral health services and HIV prevention and care to underserved populations.
- This comes amidst several grants and initiatives that have been released this year as the Biden-Harris Administration continues its commitment to health equity and combating the mental health crisis and opioid epidemic
- The grants support ongoing treatment, recovery, and harm reduction efforts nationwide, aligning with the National Drug Control Strategy and the National HIV AIDS Strategy.

# **Biden–Harris Administration Awards More than \$230 Million for Suicide Prevention, Behavioral Health Care Programs for At-Risk Communities**

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), [awarded](#) \$232.2 million in grants for suicide prevention and behavioral health care for at-risk communities, including more than \$200 million in new funding for states, territories, and Tribal nations and organizations to build local capacity for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and related crisis services.
- Grants have been awarded for various suicide prevention and behavioral health care initiatives, such as implementing the Zero Suicide model, the Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention program, a national strategy for suicide prevention, and Tribal Behavioral Health grants.

# Biden-Harris Administration Announces More Than \$200 Million To Support Youth Mental Health

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), [announced](#) \$206 million in grant awards towards youth mental health.
- In addition, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will make more Medicaid funding available for school-based health services in Virginia, improving health care access, including mental health services.
- Combined, these awards will help expand access to mental health services for students in schools, bolster the behavioral health workforce, and improve access to mental health prevention and treatment for children and youth in communities across the country.