

California

Senate Bill 328 could make California the first state to have a set starting time for middle and high schools– The bill passed through both houses in the state and is now awaiting the governor’s signature. The move to set the earliest start time to 8:30 A.M. is heavily supported by parents and researchers who say that academic performance can be enhanced if students can get a few extra hours of sleep. While this policy could create a burden on school districts by shifting bus schedules, school programs that take place before and after, and teacher contracts, it could dramatically improve students’ quality of life.

The expansion of Medi-Cal led to a decrease in the proportion of providers– With less than 7 percent of the population uninsured, the expansion of Medi-Cal under the ACA was successful in enrolling millions of individuals. This also brought to light the healthcare workforce shortage that the state is facing. The ratio of full-time primary care physicians per 100,000 Medi-Cal patients dropped from 59 in 2013 to 39 in 2015. There was also a five percentage point reduction in the same time period in the number of physicians accepting Medi-Cal with 64 percent still accepting the insurance in 2015. Medical schools across the state have been working on ways to incentivize more students to choose managed-care routes and stay in underserved areas. Health systems have also been deploying grants to help with the issue.

Other States

Hurricane Florence could create numerous health issues apart from damage and destruction– According to a chief nursing officer at one North Carolina hospital, the storm could lead to an increase in births by inducing labor due to the drop in barometric pressure. Another potential problem is that the flooding of various pig farms in the state could lead to the flow of toxic waste right into the drinking water, opening up the potential for numerous pathogen infections and gastrointestinal issues. As of September 18, 2018, the death toll was 37.

Maryland experiences rise in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)– Public health officials reported experiencing a recent and sudden influx of patients presenting with syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia. Between 2016 and 2017, there was an 8.70 percent increase in these three STDs across the US. In Maryland, there has been more than a 10 percent increase in the same time period. Owing to the fact that people with the disease may be asymptomatic, officials are urging people to take more precautions and get tested. Some of the reasons cited for the increase include decreased spending in awareness campaigns, cuts to STD prevention programs, the opioid epidemic, and a possible decrease in condom use due to birth control and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP).

Number of beds in Texas shelters holding migrant children to be expanded– According to the US Border Patrol, 4,000 unaccompanied children were detained in July. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission reported that the government facilities had 500 additional children for whom they did not have the proper capacity. A 360-bed shelter in Tornillo was originally opened for only 30 days but will be expanded with an additional 3,440 beds and will remain open for the remainder of the year.

Lawmakers discuss whether privatization of Iowa’s Medicaid program actually brought about cost savings– The state decided to hand off the management of Medicaid to private companies in 2015 based on a projection of \$232 million in cost savings for Iowans by 2018. Earlier last week, the state’s Medicaid director presented that the average annual cost per Medicaid Member increased to 11 percent in the current state fiscal year. The director believes that the increase is a result of the overuse of services by Medicaid beneficiaries that was not incorporated in the first analysis.

Healthcare-Related Surveys & Reports

85%

Percentage of Amazon prime members who reported that they would feel comfortable purchasing prescription drugs through Amazon.

61%

Percentage of hospital leaders that agree that a single-payer system would decrease healthcare costs and increase health outcomes.

55%

Percentage of people with a substance use disorder who were receiving treatment in 2017. Of note, 7 percent of pregnant women reported marijuana use in the past month in the same survey.

Newsbytes Relevant to Our Strategic Priorities



To bring focus to our work, the Institute for Health Policy and Leadership has identified three strategic priorities: oral health, mental health and hunger as a health issue. This segment highlights news articles relevant to these priorities.

Oral Health

Changes to Denti-Cal program gains acclaim by California dentist who runs a non-profit that provides dental care– The dentist says that the state has adequately addressed many of the problems that he was facing. The state increased the budget for Denti-Cal, increased the number of dentists providing Denti-Cal, and slightly increased reimbursement rates. While the changes are positive, there are still many hurdles and children in rural counties are still at a disadvantage.

Hunger as
a Health
Issue

New dietary guidelines from the government may be coming soon– Lawmakers and nutrition experts met to discuss guidelines that would include first time recommendations for women who are pregnant and infants. They also discussed the importance of having access to nutritious foods and the government's role in ensuring access for all residents regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Mental/
Behavioral
Health

Louisiana receives federal funding for Project Advancing Wellness and Resilience Education– With a newly acquired \$9 million grant (\$1.8 million per year for 5 years) through the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Louisiana will work towards expanding mental health services for its students. The schools plan to form partnerships with the state's health department to create mental health support systems for students and their families.