

California

Los Angeles (LA) County homeless deaths hit a 5-year record high in 2018– Last year, 918 homeless people died in the county, representing a 76 percent increase since 2014. Approximately 33 percent of them died in hospitals and a majority of the others died on the streets. Nearly half of the deaths involved accidents such as drowning, traffic accidents, and drug overdose.

Sacramento County's jail expansion to include medical and mental health ward– The jail currently has 1,700 inmates and 25 medical and mental health beds. The new expansion will include an additional 26 beds, a clinic, a pharmacy, an infirmary, and other support services. The county will begin seeking bids for the contract, and the state will pay 90 percent of the project budget.

Other States

Delaware, Louisiana, Massachusetts, and New York partner with nonprofit to create quality ratings for addiction treatment programs– The two-year pilot will test a rating system that includes the assessment of eight principles such as universal screening for substance abuse, access to medications, and access to trained behavioral health providers to promote a standardized system to evaluate quality.

Michigan pharmacy group finds that the state overpaid pharmacy benefit managers by \$64 million– Pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) negotiate which medications will be covered and the reimbursement rates that will be received between pharmacies and insurance companies. PBMs can bill insurance companies a higher amount than what will be paid to the pharmacies in a mechanism known as spread pricing. A joint report by a consulting company and the Michigan Pharmacists Association of over 400 community pharmacies found that between 2016 and 2018, the spread pricing margin increased from 6 percent to 34 percent for generic drugs.

Rural hospital executives discuss Medicaid expansion with North Carolina Governor– The hospitals agreed that Medicaid expansion could help keep their institutions open by decreasing the amount of uncompensated care in emergency departments. Six rural hospitals have closed in the last nine years in the state. One of the providers discussed that more than 20 percent of the care provided at their emergency department was uncompensated. In other North Carolina news, a shooting at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte left two people dead and four people injured yesterday.

Northeastern University in Massachusetts looks to file lawsuit against Juul Labs– The potential lawsuit will ask the company to pay for a statewide e-cigarette cessation program for teenagers. The university alleges that Juul used deceptive practices for advertising to minors. The university has given the company 30 days to respond to their letter before they file the lawsuit. The university has not yet provided a figure for the cost of the programs.

Florida lawmakers send series of healthcare bills to governor– Among the many bills approved by the bicameral legislature was a bill that would remove the requirement that a healthcare facility receive approval from the state before the addition of services or buildings. One bill would allow the state to pursue importing drugs from other countries like Canada. Another bill standardizes the rules around the provision of telehealth services.

New Hampshire working on program for nurses with substance addiction– The legislature passed a law last year that enabled the creation of an alternative recovery program for nurses suffering from substance addiction. The state Board of Nursing ran a one-year program known as Recovery Trek. The program encourages nurses to self-report their condition in order to receive a customized treatment plan and recovery monitoring. It is estimated that up to 10 percent of nurses suffer from addiction. In other news, a Washington bill mandating that nurses receive meal and rest breaks is awaiting the governor's signature.

Catholic adoption agency sues the state for penalizing them over policies regarding same-sex couples– The social services agency does not place children in households with same-sex couples. They are suing Michigan over the state's Department of Health and Human Services' ability to terminate contracts with agencies that discriminate against same-sex couples. In other Michigan news, thousands of Michigan residents may have been exposed to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which are chemical substances released from various sources such as firefighting foam and food paper wrappings. Over time, they can accumulate in the blood and organs.

Trust for America's Health Report on Public Health Funding

The non-profit group Trust for America's Health released its report last week, "The Impact of Chronic Underfunding on America's Public Health System," highlighting that public health is underfunded in the US. In 2017, only \$274 per person was spent on public health measures. The report ranked the states by the amount of per capita funding given by the CDC to the states to spend on public health in 2018:

Greatest Spending

1. Alaska (\$63.28 per capita)
2. Vermont (\$47.91 per capita)
3. Rhode Island (\$41.80 per capita)
4. Montana (\$36.54 per capita)
5. South Dakota (\$36.21 per capita)

Least Spending

1. New Jersey (\$17.09 per capita)
2. Indiana (\$17.58 per capita)
3. Pennsylvania (\$17.67 per capita)
4. Ohio (\$17.68 per capita)
5. Wisconsin (\$18.56 per capita)

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

University of Helsinki study finds that poor oral health in children is associated with a higher risk of heart disease in adulthood– The study tracked 755 children from 1980 to 2007. Five percent of the children had no oral health issues while 72 percent had at least three issues. Having at least one oral health issue increased a child's chances of having thickening of his or her artery walls (subclinical atherosclerosis) by 87 percent.

Hunger as a Health Issue

Many Venezuelans suffering from hunger look to mangos for nutrition– According to a national survey, 90 percent of families in Venezuela cannot afford food. The food shortage crisis has been going on since 2010, and the government has been refusing humanitarian aid. Families are looking to mangos as their primary food source because mango trees can be found in public spaces and the vitamin C content and fiber content are adequate.

Mental/ Behavioral Health

Walgreens pharmacists to learn to detect mental health signs– Walgreens started a training program that will help pharmacists learn how to identify signs of mental health illness and substance abuse and to provide help. The four-hour interactive online program is modeled after an Australian program. Pharmacists who complete the training will earn education credits from the American Pharmacists Association.

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