

## In Today's Issue

[HRSA Launches New National Maternal Health Initiative](#)

[AHA Resource Shows How Rural Hospitals Preserve Access to Care](#)

[HRSA Offering Technical Assistance for Rural Hospitals](#)

[CDC: Measles Cases are Up. Clinicians Stay Alert](#)

[COVID-19 Information](#)

[Briefly Noted](#)

### HRSA Launches New National Maternal Health Initiative

On Thursday, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Administrator Carole Johnson, joined by Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-IL), co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus, launched a year-long *Enhancing Maternal Health Initiative*.

According to a [news release](#), the initiative will strengthen, expand, and accelerate HRSA's maternal health work to address maternal mortality and maternal health disparities in partnership with mothers, grantees, community organizations, and state and local health officials across the country. The initiative focuses on parts of the country where HRSA says it has significant investments, there are significant opportunities for new partnerships and collaborations, and there is high need. In addition to Illinois, the initiative includes Arizona, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Oregon, and the District of Columbia.

For more information on HRSA's maternal health work, [click here](#).

### AHA Resource Shows How Rural Hospitals Preserve Access to Care

This week, the American Hospital Association (AHA) released a [new resource](#) highlighting how hospitals and health systems are prioritizing preserving access to care for patients in rural America, including through access points like hospital outpatient departments (HOPD) that provide essential services for rural and low-income communities.

According to AHA, the report details how hospitals have been a lifeline for struggling rural physician practices helping to keep their doors open, and HOPDs have remained convenient, high-quality access points for rural patients with more complex care needs.

AHA says among other findings, hospitals were two and a half times more likely to acquire physician practices in rural areas than other entities, including commercial insurers which are overwhelmingly focused on larger and more profitable markets.

### HRSA Offering Technical Assistance for Rural Hospitals

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is seeking applications for those interested in receiving two years of technical assistance through the Targeted Technical Assistance for Rural Hospitals Program (TTAP). This program, which is supported by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, is for rural hospitals seeking to enhance their financial and operational capacity. Technical assistance for this project is provided by the Center for Public Health Practice and Research at the Georgia Southern University, and will begin March 2024.

TTAP is not a grant program for hospitals. Instead, participating hospitals receive technical assistance at no cost. All applicants are eligible to participate in webinars and training events focused on best practices for financial and operational improvement held throughout the grant period.

*The original deadline for applications was Jan. 31, but has been extended to Feb. 7. To apply, [click here](#).*

## CDC: Measles Cases are Up, Clinicians Stay Alert

U.S. health officials are warning clinicians to be alert for cases of measles following several outbreaks, largely among unvaccinated children, according to a [USA Today report](#).

In an [email Thursday](#), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged vigilance among health providers across the U.S. following reports of nearly two dozen cases of the preventable virus since December. Health providers should look for patients with rash and fever, symptoms of measles, and pay attention to patients who have recently traveled internationally, the alert said.

Officials have tracked seven cases of measles being brought into the country and two U.S. outbreaks with more than five cases each, the CDC said. Most cases were in young children and adolescents who had not received the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine even though they were eligible. For more information, [click here](#).

## COVID-19 Information

The Illinois Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) has launched a weekly [Infectious Respiratory Disease Surveillance Dashboard](#) that will be updated weekly on Friday. This report provides the public with the latest data on hospital visits, seasonal trends, lab test positivity and demographic data.

[Click here](#) to visit the IDPH COVID-19 resources webpage. IDPH will continue to report the weekly number of people with COVID-19 admitted to hospitals from emergency departments, deaths and vaccinations, with COVID-19, influenza and respiratory syncytial virus information also reported through the dashboard of the [Illinois Wastewater Surveillance System](#).

## Briefly Noted

Earlier this week, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) [announced](#) 21.3 million people selected an Affordable Care Act Health Insurance Marketplace plan during the 2024 Open Enrollment Period. Total plan selections include more than five million people — about a fourth — who are new to the Marketplaces and 16 million people who renewed their coverage. Notably, open enrollment continues in four states and Washington, D.C., through Jan. 31. To view the Marketplace enrollment snapshot report, [click here](#). For more information about how to enroll in Marketplace coverage, visit [HealthCare.gov](#), [CuidadoDeSalud.gov](#), or your State-based Marketplace.

This week, the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), [announced](#) \$50 million in grants for states to connect millions more children to critical healthcare services, particularly for mental health, at school. Made possible by the investments of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), the grants will provide 20 states up to \$2.5 million each in funding that can help states implement, enhance, and expand the use of school-based health services through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

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