Federal Health Update

FEB. 28, 2020

Welcome to Federal Health Update. This newsletter is a compilation of the latest news in the federal health care sector.

Sponsored by:

SPECTRUM Healthcare Resources

Additional Sponsorship Opportunities Available.

Please contact Kate Theroux if you are interested in supporting this service.

ktheroux@federalhealthcarenews.com

EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL NEWS

- **On Feb. 26, 2020, the House unanimously passed all five bipartisan bills brought to the floor by the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.**

  These bills provide lease relief to Gold Star spouses and spouses of injured service members; expand legal services for homeless veterans; guarantee veteran-owned business can compete for VA grants; and ensure transparency for veterans seeking higher education and when searching on VA’s own website.

  - H.R. 3749, Legal Services for Homeless Veterans Act (Rep. Panetta)

- **On Feb. 26, 2020, the president named the vice president to lead the U.S. Coronavirus Task Force and the committee members.** On Feb. 27, the vice president announced the committee will include Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, U.S. Surgeon General (Dr.) Jerome Adams, Larry Kudlow, Director of the National Economic Council and White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx to the task force.
The Office of the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OSEAC) announced Army Command Sgt. Maj. Michael L. Gragg has been selected to replace Command Master Chief Charles A. Collins as the command senior enlisted leader for the Defense Health Agency, Falls Church, Virginia. He was previously assigned as the command sergeant major for the U.S. Army Medical Command, Falls Church, Virginia.

The Department of Defense issued a policy memorandum to military commanders about preparing for and responding to novel coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission on Feb. 25, 2020. The memorandum outlines procedures before someone in the community is infected, what to do once transmission of the disease begins within the community and guidelines when there is sustained transmission occurs within the community.

To read the full memorandum, please visit: https://media.defense.gov/2020/Feb/26/2002255006/-/1/-1/-1/1/FORCE-HEALTH-PROTECTION-SUPPLEMENT-2.PDF


There is no news from the VA this week.

The Department of Health and Human Services announced the appointment of former Kansas Gov. Jeff Colyer, to serve as chair of the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services (NACRHHS).

Colyer, a surgeon by training, will be the fifth chair in the 32-year history of the Committee and the second chair from Kansas after Nancy Kassebaum Baker, who served during the Bush Administration.

The Committee was established by statute in 1987 to advise the Secretary on access to, delivery of, and financing for health care and human services in rural areas. The Committee produces policy briefs and reports on key rural issues, along with recommendations to address the challenges. The Committee is comprised of 21 members, including the chair, who represent the diversity of health and human service issues in rural America. Members provide an array of expertise, including the range of rural-focused health programs under the purview of the Secretary, and are knowledgeable in the fields of rural human and social services. Examples include issues related to transportation, children and family services, social work, services for the elderly and rural economic development.
Gov. Jeff Colyer M.D. finished his gubernatorial term in 2019. He practices craniofacial and reconstructive surgery. In addition to his medical practice, he is known for volunteering with International Medical Corps in war and conflict zones around the world including the Rwandan, Afghan, Iraq, South Sudan, and Libya.

- **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), awarded approximately $117 million to expand access to HIV care, treatment, medication, and prevention services.**

  These awards focus on 48 counties, Washington, D.C., and San Juan, Puerto Rico, geographic areas where more than 50 percent of new HIV diagnoses occurred in 2016 and 2017, as well as the seven states with a substantial rural HIV burden.

  HRSA’s Health Center Program awards will be used to identify at-risk individuals and engage in preventive services, test for HIV, and prescribe pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) when appropriate. Awards made to HRSA’s Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program recipients will be used to link people who are either newly diagnosed with HIV, or diagnosed but currently not in care, to essential HIV care, treatment, and support services, helping them reach viral suppression and reduce HIV transmission.

  HRSA awarded nearly $54 million to 195 health centers with service delivery sites in geographic locations identified by the EHE initiative. This first-of-its-kind program emphasizes outreach, HIV testing, partnerships, and workforce expansion to increase access to and use of PrEP, as well as linking individuals who test positive for HIV to treatment.

  HRSA awarded approximately $63 million to 60 Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program recipients to link people with HIV to essential HIV care and treatment and support services, as well as to provide workforce training and technical assistance. This includes more than $55 million to 39 metropolitan areas and eight states, which are Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Parts A and B jurisdictions, to enable recipients to implement strategies, interventions, approaches, and core medical and support services to reduce new HIV infections in the U.S.

  In addition, HRSA awarded approximately $3 million to 11 Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Part F AIDS Education and Training Centers Program recipients to provide workforce capacity development and technical assistance to the identified jurisdictions.

  HRSA also awarded $5 million to two organizations to provide technical assistance and systems coordination services to the 47 Parts A and B jurisdictions which received funding today.

  For a list of award recipients, visit Health Center Program: [https://bphc.hrsa.gov/program-opportunities/primary-care-hiv-prevention/fy2020-awards](https://bphc.hrsa.gov/program-opportunities/primary-care-hiv-prevention/fy2020-awards)

- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has confirmed an infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 in California in a person who reportedly did not have relevant travel history or exposure to another known patient with COVID-19.**

  At this time, the patient’s exposure is unknown. It’s possible this could be an instance of community spread of COVID-19, which would be the first time this has happened in the United States. Community spread means spread of an illness for which the source of infection is unknown. It’s also possible, however, that the patient may have been exposed to a returned traveler who was infected.

  This case was detected through the U.S. public health system — picked up by astute clinicians. This brings the total number of COVID-19 cases in the United States to 15.
The federal government has been working closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, as well as public health partners, to respond to this public health threat. Unprecedented, aggressive efforts have been taken to contain the spread and mitigate the impact of this virus. This is a rapidly evolving situation. CDC will continue to update the public as circumstances warrant. For more information about COVID-19 visit www.cdc.gov/covid19.

REPORTS/POLICIES

- The GAO published “Defense Health Care: DOD Surveys Indicate Beneficiary Experience Generally Unchanged in First Year of TRICARE Select,” (GAO-20-318) on Feb. 27, 2020. This report analyzes DoD's survey results to determine changes after implementation of TRICARE Select in non-Prime beneficiaries' ratings of TRICARE; non-Prime beneficiaries' reported ability to find providers and obtain appointments; and civilian providers' reported acceptance of TRICARE. https://www.gao.gov/assets/710/704900.pdf

HILL HEARINGS

- The House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees will hold a joint hearing on March 3, 2020, to receive the legislative presentations of multiple veterans’ service organizations.
- The House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees will hold a joint hearing on March 4, 2020, to receive the legislative presentation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.
- The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Department of Defense will hold a hearing on March 4, 2020, to examine the proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2021 for the National Guard and Reserve.
- The Senate Armed Services Committee will hold a hearing on March 4, 2020, to examine the Department of Defense budget posture in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2021 and the Future Years Defense Program.
- The House Veteran Affairs Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing on March 5, 2020, to examine whether the VA is prepared for the growing number of senior veterans.
- The House Veteran Affairs Subcommittee on Technology Modernization Health will hold an oversight hearing on March 5, 2020, to examine the challenges with the go-live of electronic health record modernization.
- The House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees will hold a joint hearing on March 11, 2020, to receive the legislative presentation of the American Legion.

LEGISLATION

- H.R.5982 (introduced Feb. 26, 2020): The Safe Medicine Act was referred to the House Committee on Energy. Sponsor: Representative Bill Posey [R-FL-8]
- H.R.5958 (introduced Feb. 25, 2020): The Senior Health Planning Account Act was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means. Sponsor: Representative Brian Higgins [D-NY-26]
- S.3333 (introduced Feb. 25, 2020): A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the implementation of curricula for training students, teachers, and school personnel to understand, recognize, prevent, and respond to signs of human trafficking and exploitation in
children and youth, and for other purposes was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. Sponsor: Senator Lisa Murkowski [R-AK]

MEETINGS

- The 2020 HIMSS Conference will be held on **March 9-13, 2020**, in Orlando Florida. [https://www.himssconference.org](https://www.himssconference.org)
- The 10th Anniversary Heroes of Military Medicine Awards Dinner will be held on **May 7, 2020**, in Washington DC. [https://www.hjf.org/hmm](https://www.hjf.org/hmm)
- The 10th Annual Traumatic Brain Injury Conference will be held on **June 1-2, 2020**, in Washington DC. [https://tbiconference.com/home/](https://tbiconference.com/home/)

If you need further information on any item in the *Federal Health Update*, please contact Kate Theroux at (703) 447-3257 or by e-mail at katetheroux@federalhealthcarenews.com.