

# SECRETARY'S STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



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## ***Secretary's Strategic Initiatives***

### ***Vision***

At the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), our mission is to help provide the building blocks that Americans need to live healthy, successful lives. We fulfill that mission every day by providing millions of children, families, and seniors with access to high-quality health care, helping people to find jobs and parents to find affordable child care, keeping the food on Americans' shelves safe, keeping infectious diseases at bay, and pushing the boundaries of how we diagnose and treat disease.

To achieve these goals, we must always keep an eye on the future – to prepare for the next public health emergency, pursue the next lifesaving cure, and support the development of the next generation of Americans. But we also must look more closely at existing programs and services and ask: What needs to be changed? How can we serve Americans better? What can be done less expensively, faster and more transparently?

These priorities reflect both considerations – a clear-eyed view of the new investments we will need to meet the challenges and opportunities of this decade, and a tough-minded assessment about how we can reform and refocus existing programs to make an even bigger difference in Americans' lives.

Together, they form our vision for how HHS can contribute to an even stronger, healthier, and more prosperous America in the years to come.

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## ***Secretary's Strategic Initiatives***

### ***Promote High-Value, Safe, and Effective Health Care***

Across America and for all Americans, HHS is working to improve patient outcomes, ensure patient safety, promote efficiency and accountability, encourage shared responsibility, and reduce health care costs. Through improved administrative processes, reforms, innovations, and additional information to support consumer decision-making, HHS is supporting high-value, safe, and effective care across health care settings and in the community.

- **Improve Health Care Quality and Patient Safety**

HHS is working to improve health care quality by making it more patient-centered, reliable, and safe. Through the [National Quality Strategy](#), HHS is providing a roadmap to guide local, state and national efforts to improve quality of care and safety nationwide. In order to help patients make more informed decisions about their health care, HHS is supporting patient-centered research initiatives. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is implementing value-based purchasing programs, which will reward hospitals and other health providers for delivering high-quality care, rather than just a high volume of services. CMS is working to contract with [Accountable Care Organizations](#), which will link provider payments with improved quality and efficiency. In addition, HHS launched a new national program, called the [Partnership for Patients](#), which is a public-private partnership that will help improve the quality, safety, and affordability of health care for all Americans. The Partnership for Patients brings together leaders of major hospitals, employers, physicians, nurses, and patient advocates along with state and federal governments in a shared effort to make hospital care safer, more reliable, and less costly.

- **Promote High-Value Care**

Through the new [Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation](#), HHS is designing, testing, and evaluating new models of payment and delivery, and will promote the most promising strategies. One example is supporting interventions to reduce healthcare-acquired conditions. Another is using a single payment to providers when they collaborate to manage multiple procedures for a patient instead of numerous billing codes. Reforms like care coordination can help patients manage multiple treatment needs through a single point of contact, such as a patient-centered medical home, increasing efficiency and improving patient satisfaction while reducing costs. Through the [Medicare-Medicaid Coordination Office](#), HHS is simplifying administrative processes for individuals enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid, which will help improve the quality and efficiency of care.

- **Use Health Information Technology**

HHS is encouraging health care providers to become meaningful users of [health information technology](#) (IT) by accelerating health IT adoption and promoting electronic health records to help improve the quality of health care, reduce costs, and ultimately, improve health outcomes. HHS is undertaking multiple initiatives to ensure that privacy standards and policies related to the storage and transmittal of electronic health information are strong, credible, and broadly implemented.

- **Promote Community Living**

HHS is improving the accessibility and quality of services to enable people with disabilities and seniors with impaired functioning to live in community settings. HHS is working to improve the

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training and competency of direct care workers and is encouraging the development of career pathways for existing workers to become care-giving professionals. HHS is collaborating with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to expand community living options by reducing barriers to affordable and accessible housing and by better coordinating housing with health and human services. In addition, HHS has assembled [information on available resources and benefits for caregivers](#) in their efforts to support their loved ones living in the community.

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### ***Secure and Expand Health Insurance Coverage***

HHS is working to implement provisions of the Affordable Care Act to secure and expand access to affordable health insurance coverage and strengthen consumer protections in health insurance. These reforms put Americans back in charge of their own health care by creating an important foundation of patients' rights in the private health insurance market and increasing health coverage choices for families.

- **Make Coverage More Secure for Those Who Have Insurance**

HHS is making coverage more stable and secure through insurance market reforms. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, children cannot be excluded from coverage based on their pre-existing health conditions, and in 2014 that protection will be extended to all Americans. Insurers are now prohibited from putting lifetime dollar limits in health plans, which could often leave people without medical care when it is most needed. HHS is working with states to identify unreasonable rate increases by health insurance plans, and is requiring new health plans to implement an appeals process for coverage or payment decisions. Additionally, health insurers are generally required to spend 80 or 85 percent of health insurance premiums on medical care and quality improvement, not on profits and overhead.

- **Expand Consumer Choice and Support Informed Decision-Making**

HHS is expanding consumer choice and supporting informed decision-making about health insurance coverage. [HealthCare.gov](http://HealthCare.gov), a new website developed by HHS, provides unprecedented access to critical information about private insurance plans and available public programs, enabling consumers to compare options. HHS is helping states to develop new, competitive private health insurance markets called Affordable Insurance Exchanges that will allow millions of Americans and small businesses to compare a range of plans and buy insurance at affordable prices beginning in 2014. New premium tax credits and cost-sharing reductions will help ensure coverage is affordable for families. Through the Exchanges, individuals and small businesses will have the same choices of health insurance as members of Congress. The Exchanges will guarantee that all people have a choice of quality, affordable health insurance even in the event of a job loss, job switch, move, or illness.

- **Make Health Insurance Coverage More Affordable and Accessible**

HHS is establishing new programs that make health insurance coverage more affordable and accessible. As a bridge to 2014, the [Early Retiree Reinsurance Program](#) helps employers continue to provide much-needed health insurance to their retirees age 55 to 64 who are not yet eligible for Medicare. This program is helping both retirees, who will no longer be faced with potentially financially devastating health care costs, and employers, who will be able to continue to provide affordable health care coverage to retirees. The [Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan](#) program provides comprehensive insurance for Americans who have been uninsured for six months and have a pre-existing condition.

- **Increase Health Insurance Coverage for Low-Income Populations**

HHS is working to extend Medicaid coverage to millions of low-income individuals who were previously not eligible for coverage. By simplifying complex eligibility rules and systems for processing most Medicaid applications, HHS is establishing a streamlined system of coverage that will seamlessly and efficiently meet consumers' needs, improve quality, and lower costs.

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### ***Eliminate Health Disparities***

Race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, age, mental health, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, geographic location, and other characteristics historically linked to exclusion or discrimination have been shown to influence health status. Racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to get the preventive care they need to stay healthy, are more likely to suffer from serious illnesses, such as diabetes or heart disease, and are less likely to have access to quality health care. HHS is dedicated to improving the health of all people and is developing policies and programs that will help eliminate health disparities and achieve health equity.

- **Achieve Health Equity**

Through the [HHS Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities](#), HHS has outlined goals and actions it will pursue to eliminate health disparities. In order to ensure access to primary and coordinated care, HHS is taking action to help increase the proportion of persons with a usual primary care provider and to increase the number of [patient-centered medical homes](#) that provide comprehensive and coordinated primary care. HHS is also funding new and existing community health centers, which provide services to many racial and ethnic minority populations.

- **Ensure Access to Quality, Culturally Competent Care for Vulnerable Populations**

HHS is working to improve the cultural competence and diversity of the health care workforce, as well as address disparities in access to health care. HHS is expanding the primary care workforce and encouraging health care professionals to practice in health shortage areas through the [National Health Service Corps](#). HHS is increasing the number of students from populations underrepresented in the health professions, training more people in medical interpretation to help serve patients with limited English proficiency, and training community workers to help people [navigate](#) the health care system.

- **Improve Data Collection and Measurement**

HHS is improving the monitoring and collection of health data by race, ethnicity, sex, primary language, and disability status, and is planning for the collection of additional health data. These efforts are helping researchers, policy makers, health providers and advocates to identify and address health disparities afflicting vulnerable communities. Better data can help researchers understand and eliminate health disparities by helping to identify areas of need and better target responses.

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### ***Promote Prevention and Wellness***

Prevention and wellness are essential components to good health and a high quality of life for Americans young and old. HHS is dedicated to improving the health and quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. Good health comes not just from receiving quality medical care, but also from clean air and water, safe outdoor spaces for physical activity, safe worksites, healthy foods, violence free environments, and healthy homes. Because the good health of Americans is intertwined with that of other nations, HHS is also protecting and promoting the health and well-being of Americans by supporting the vision of a healthier, safer world through global health action.

- **Improve the Accessibility and Affordability of Prevention and Wellness Services**

Co-pays, co-insurance, deductibles, and other cost-sharing strategies reduce the likelihood that individuals will use preventive services. The Affordable Care Act requires new health plans to cover certain recommended [preventive services](#) and to eliminate cost-sharing for those services, to help make wellness and prevention services affordable and accessible. The Affordable Care Act also helps make it easier and more affordable for individuals enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid to access preventive screenings and services.

- **Use Evidence-based Policies and Programs to Promote Prevention and Wellness**

HHS is prioritizing evidence-based policy and program interventions to address the leading causes of death and disability in the United States including heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic lower respiratory diseases, unintentional injuries, and preventable behaviors such as tobacco use, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol use that contribute to those causes. Initiatives such as the [Million Hearts Campaign](#) exemplify these programs. The Affordable Care Act's [Prevention and Public Health Fund](#) is designed to improve our ability to prevent disease by detecting it early, helping us manage it, and by providing states and communities with the resources they need to promote healthy living.

- **Implement the National Prevention Strategy**

HHS is implementing the [National Prevention Strategy](#), which presents a vision, goals, and action items that public, private, and nonprofit organizations, and individuals can take to increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life. The National Prevention Strategy aims to guide our Nation in the most effective and achievable means for improving health and well-being. The Strategy prioritizes prevention by integrating recommendations and actions across multiple settings to improve health and save lives. HHS, in coordination with the National Prevention Council and a broad range of stakeholders, is implementing key goals of the strategy, which include building healthy and safe community environments; expanding quality preventive services in both clinical and community settings; empowering people to make healthy choices; and eliminating health disparities. Within this framework, the priorities provide evidence-based recommendations that are most likely to reduce the burden of the leading causes of preventable death and major illness. The seven priorities are: tobacco-free living, preventing drug abuse and excessive alcohol use, healthy eating, active living, injury and violence-free living, reproductive and sexual health, and mental and emotional well-being.

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- **Working with Global Partners to Address Non-Communicable Diseases**

HHS is dedicated to working with its global partners to share evidence-based practices and establish effective methods to reduce non-communicable diseases worldwide, across all populations. HHS efforts to address the leading causes of death, illness and disability include directing research toward non-communicable disease and injury prevention, emphasizing program capacity to address multiple chronic conditions, and promoting the integration of effective public health and trade policies. HHS is also improving policy and programmatic options for reducing risk factors for non-communicable diseases.



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### ***Help Americans Achieve and Maintain Healthy Weight***

Today, about two-thirds of adults and one-third of children in the United States are overweight or obese, increasing their risk for chronic diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, stroke, and arthritis. Almost 10 percent of all medical spending is used to treat obesity-related conditions. In order to reverse the obesity epidemic, HHS is employing a comprehensive approach that includes both clinical and public health strategies and touches people where they live, work, learn, and play.

- **Improve Nutrition and Physical Activity in Early Childhood Settings and Schools**

HHS is improving program standards for nutrition, physical activity, and television viewing time, and will promote adoption of these standards in child care settings through state licensing programs. HHS is supporting access to safe, developmentally appropriate play spaces for children's physical activity. HHS is expanding proven Head Start health programs to child care centers and other early childhood settings and is implementing assessment tools. In collaboration with the U.S. Departments of Education and Agriculture, HHS is developing and implementing school-based interventions to improve school food, nutritional health, and physical activity. Through the [President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports](#) and the [President's Challenge](#), HHS is renewing its commitment to children's fitness and nutritional health.

- **Promote Healthy Weight through Medical Settings**

HHS is developing training tools to enhance awareness, knowledge, and skills for health care providers and others. HHS has documented all [covered obesity-related services](#) under Medicaid and the [Children's Health Insurance Program](#) and will continue to emphasize healthy weight interventions in pilot and demonstration programs. HHS is supporting new health services research and programs focused on healthy weight in high-risk populations, increasing understanding of the forces contributing to obesity, and developing and implementing strategies for obesity prevention and treatment.

- **Promote Workplace Wellness and Successful Community-wide Policies and Interventions**

HHS is identifying and implementing policy changes that can help employees make healthy choices. HHS is focused on becoming a model healthy worksite, and is helping workplaces become healthier by promoting proven programs like [LEANWorks!](#). HHS is implementing interventions that improve physical activity and nutrition through [Community Transformation Grants](#), which are working to identify and disseminate model programs that work across community settings. These grants will support the implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of evidence-based community preventive health activities. Community programs and policies targeting childhood obesity are being implemented across the country, but their approaches have not been systematically studied. The [Healthy Communities Study](#) is a five-year observational study that will address the need for a cross-cutting national study of community programs and policies and their relationship to childhood obesity.

- **Empower Consumers to Make Healthy Choices in the Marketplace**

HHS is helping consumers understand nutrition information on packaged foods by working with industry to develop new guidance for [menu labeling](#). Provisions of the Affordable Care Act ensure that patrons of chain restaurants and vending machines have nutritional information about the food they are consuming. HHS will collaborate with public and private sector partners to encourage the reduction of salt and trans fats in the food supply.

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### ***Prevent and Reduce Tobacco Use***

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States. Each year, an estimated 443,000 people die prematurely from smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke, and another 8.6 million live with a serious illness caused by smoking. Despite these risks, approximately 45.3 million U.S. adults smoke cigarettes. Smokeless tobacco, cigars, and pipes also have deadly consequences, including lung, larynx, esophageal, and oral cancers. The Affordable Care Act makes fighting tobacco use a national priority by expanding coverage of tobacco cessation services and providing support for evidence-based tobacco control. HHS is implementing the actions outlined in its [Tobacco Control Strategic Action Plan](#) to prevent and reduce tobacco use through a comprehensive approach designed to build upon HHS's expertise and resources in support of proven, practical, and achievable interventions.

- **Strengthen Evidence-based Tobacco Control Interventions and Policies**

HHS is strengthening efforts to implement proven tobacco control interventions at the state and local level. These interventions include establishing smoke-free policies, promoting cessation, helping tobacco users quit, preventing initiation of tobacco use, and increasing local, state, and tribal enforcement of tobacco regulation.

- **Change Social Norms Around Tobacco Use**

HHS is developing a comprehensive communication agenda to promote a culture change around tobacco use which includes [national campaigns to prevent and reduce youth tobacco use](#). HHS is also working to change social norms by implementing innovative social media initiatives to assist smokers interested in quitting. HHS is unifying communication and education campaigns employed across agencies to effectively provide reliable, updated, and consistent information about the risks of tobacco use and the benefits of quitting.

- **Accelerate Research to Expand the Science Base and Monitor Progress**

HHS is developing and implementing new research and surveillance activities to address gaps in knowledge about [what works in tobacco prevention and control](#), including developing new prevention and treatment interventions for high-risk populations, and removing barriers to accessing these interventions. HHS is leveraging and expanding its regulatory science including evolving tobacco product changes, industry practices, and public perception of products to better inform and support FDA's regulatory actions.

- **Leverage HHS Systems and Resources**

HHS is leveraging existing systems and resources to implement model tobacco control policies and lead by example. Activities HHS is engaging in include making sure that all HHS health care delivery sites provide comprehensive, evidence-based cessation treatment, implementing a comprehensive HHS Tobacco-Free Campus Policy, and promoting expanded cessation benefits for federal employees.

- **Foster Global Tobacco Control through Exchange of Best Practices and Capacity Building**

HHS continues to collaborate with global partners to exchange information on innovative tobacco prevention practices and contributes expertise to broader global tobacco control efforts. HHS is working with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners at home and abroad to strengthen global tobacco surveillance and laboratory capacity. HHS is also providing global

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leadership in the development of laboratory capacity to measure human exposure to tobacco through its support of the WHO Tobacco Laboratory Network, and it supports innovative research and training programs to address the burden of tobacco use on low- and middle-income countries.

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### ***Support the National HIV/AIDS Strategy***

Over the nearly 30 years since the AIDS epidemic began, [HHS](#) has been working closely with its partners to [respond to the HIV and AIDS crisis](#) in the United States. Now, because of these efforts, HHS has better diagnostic capabilities to test more people, more quickly, and has more effective treatments that enable people living with HIV to enjoy longer, healthier lives. However, HIV and AIDS continue to exact a significant toll on Americans of all ages. An estimated [1.1 million Americans are living with HIV today](#). HHS is expanding its efforts to prevent new infections, ensuring access to appropriate care and treatment for those living with HIV and AIDS, and focusing on communities most affected. HHS participated with federal partner agencies and the White House Office of National AIDS Policy to develop [a National HIV/AIDS Strategy](#) and [HHS is working to achieve](#) the goals in the strategy.

- **Reduce New HIV Infections**

In order to reduce new HIV infections, HHS is working to intensify HIV prevention efforts in communities where HIV is most heavily concentrated; expand targeted efforts to prevent HIV infection using a combination of effective, evidence-based approaches; and educate all Americans about the threat of HIV and how to prevent it. Achieving this goal will require active steps to diagnose Americans who are infected with HIV yet unaware of their health condition.

- **Increase Access to Care and Improve Health Outcomes**

In order to improve access to care and health outcomes for all persons living with HIV/AIDS, HHS is working to ensure that persons who are newly diagnosed are immediately linked to high-quality and continuous care; increase the number and diversity of providers who are able to deliver high-quality HIV care; and support people living with HIV who have other health conditions and/or require basic support, such as housing. HHS will continue to actively engage with a broad variety of partners in implementing the Affordable Care Act so that people living with HIV/AIDS can benefit from expansion of Medicaid, increased funding for prevention, and the creation of health insurance exchanges. Equally critical is the need to develop new and better therapies and improved drug regimens.

- **Reduce HIV-Related Disparities and Health Inequities**

To support a concerted national effort to reduce health-related disparities and inequities in HIV care, HHS is working to reduce HIV-related mortality in communities at high risk for HIV infection; adopt community-level approaches to reduce HIV infection in high-risk communities; and reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

- **Support Global Efforts to Achieve the National HIV/AIDS Strategy's Goals**

HHS is actively engaged in global partnerships to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS. It is partnering with health organizations and countries across the world to reduce death and disease, and leveraging resources to maximize international research. HHS is providing technical expertise, health and scientific leadership, and on-the-ground experience in health systems around the world for prevention and eradication of HIV/AIDS.

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### ***Put Children and Youth on the Path to Successful Futures***

HHS is committed to supporting both evidence-based programs and innovative approaches for children and youth in order to positively impact a range of important social outcomes such as child maltreatment, school readiness, teen pregnancy prevention, sexually transmitted infections, and delinquency. HHS is investing in strategies that give children and youth a positive start in life and help ensure their future health and development.

- **Promoting Improvements in Maternal, Child, and Family Health and Development**

Recognizing the importance of promoting healthy development for children and improving maternal health, the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program gives funding to states, territories, and tribes to provide pregnant women and children birth to age 5 with evidence-based home visiting services. In these programs, nurses, teachers, social workers or other trained staff work with families in their home to help parents succeed as parents by teaching them positive parenting skills, helping them to identify any developmental or health issues, and connecting parents with community supports and services they may need to support their children's healthy development. The initiative seeks to replicate models that have been shown to improve maternal and newborn health; prevent child injuries, child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment; improve school readiness and achievement; and improve the coordination and referrals for other community resources and supports.

- **Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care**

HHS is working to fund new approaches that reduce the length of foster care stays. The Permanency Innovations Initiative funds partnerships between state and local public child welfare agencies, non-profits, and universities to implement demonstration projects designed to help connect children and youth who have long stays in foster care with safe and permanent homes. The program's six grantees are developing or enhancing permanency services for specific populations known to have disproportionately long lengths of stay in foster care, including Native American and African American children; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual youth; children with severe emotional disturbances; and children affected by trauma. In addition, Congress recently has granted the Secretary authority to waive certain provisions of federal child welfare laws to spur innovation in prevention and permanency strategies, and ultimately improve outcomes for children and families and HHS will work with states to use this new flexibility to test new approaches to improving outcomes for children. HHS also is exploring best practice guidelines and models to ensure that children with mental health and trauma-related conditions have access to effective care and treatment and that when psychotropic drugs are prescribed they are medically indicated and provided to children in foster care only when absolutely necessary, and with proper oversight.

- **Reducing Rates of Teen Pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Associated Sexual Risk Behaviors**

HHS is investing in effective programs that have been shown to reduce teen pregnancy or the risk behaviors associated with teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Under the new Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, HHS funds states, non-profit organizations, school districts, universities, and others to replicate models that have been rigorously evaluated and shown to be effective at reducing teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, or other associated sexual risk behaviors. Funding also supports research and demonstration projects that will develop and test

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additional models and innovative strategies to prevent teen pregnancy, so that we continue to expand and refine our evidence base. Formula grants to states through the Personal Responsibility Education Program, part of the Affordable Care Act, also fund evidence-based program models and test new strategies. Both programs target groups with high teen pregnancy rates.

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### ***Promote Early Childhood Health and Development***

Children's early experiences are critical in shaping the foundation for their long-term development and growth. Young children are capable of tremendous growth and resilience, even in the face of adversity. Nurturing and responsive relationships with parents and caregivers, as well as stimulating and engaging learning environments at home, in early care, and education settings can help promote positive outcomes in young children. HHS is committed to ensuring the healthy growth and development of all young children by providing high-quality early care and education, ensuring continuity and consistency in quality care and services, and supporting the diverse needs of families of young children.

- **Build Successful Early Learning and Development Systems**

HHS is supporting states in designing and implementing high-quality services and programs for children through the [Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge](#) (RTT-ELC), an effort jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Education and HHS. This initiative is a first-of-its-kind competitive program that will provide funding to winning states to bring innovation and quality improvement to the full spectrum of early education programs – including child care, public pre-K, Head Start, and private preschools – with a focus on those programs serving children from disadvantaged and low-income families. RTT-ELC will promote early learning standards, workforce development, quality rating systems for early education programs, and connections between early learning programs and programs providing high-quality health, nutrition, mental health, and family support services.

- **Promote High-Quality and Accountable Programs**

HHS is dedicated to improving quality and increasing parents' knowledge and understanding of the program options available to them. As part of this, HHS is promoting in all states the use of [Quality Rating and Improvement Systems \(QRIS\)](#) which is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate to parents the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. It links high-quality program standards with quality improvement investments and resources. HHS is also working to ensure that [Head Start and Early Head Start](#) agencies receiving federal funds provide the highest quality comprehensive education and development services, meet Head Start's quality standards, and promote the learning and development of eligible children. Several initiatives have been put in place to support Head Start program staff and administrators in their efforts to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of services delivered to children and families. HHS has implemented the Classroom Assessment Scoring System: Pre-Kindergarten Edition (CLASS: Pre-K), an instrument that allows programs to evaluate and identify areas of improvement in teaching, learning, and the social-emotional climate of classrooms. HHS is providing top-notch technical assistance to Head Start programs to help them bring the best evidence-based early education strategies to all Head Start classrooms, and will require lower performing Head Start programs to compete with other entities for continued funding. HHS has also funded five National Centers on Head Start Excellence that are charged with providing information about evidence-based best practices.

- **Ensure an Effective Early Childhood Workforce**

HHS is promoting high-quality adult-child interactions in early care and education settings by using the CLASS: Pre-K instrument to assess classroom quality and teacher-child interactions in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. This evaluation effort will help inform the professional development needs of the workforce. HHS is coordinating with the U.S. Department of Education to

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improve the preparation, credentialing and higher-education opportunities for early childhood teachers and caregivers.

- **Support Foundations of Children's Learning and Development**

HHS is supporting the foundations of children's growth and development by promoting family engagement in early care and education programs and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of children. HHS is implementing health and safety standards and standards for health and behavioral screening and follow-up practices; these guidelines are an important part of quality improvement for Head Start/Early Head Start settings, child care and other early care and education settings. HHS is also supporting connections between early care and education settings and the [Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting](#) program. These efforts will promote positive outcomes for young children by ensuring that they are healthy and ready to learn and that their families are able to provide stimulating learning environments at home.



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### ***Protect Americans' Health and Safety during Emergencies, and Foster Resilience in Response to Emergencies***

HHS continues to improve the Nation's ability to address the health, public health, and human services impacts of large-scale disasters and emergencies. HHS provides technical assistance, subject matter expertise, and direct program services to help states, tribes, territories, local communities, and other countries prepare for, respond to, and rapidly recover from disasters and emergencies. HHS has developed a [National Health Security Strategy](#) to guide efforts to address the current gaps in national, state, local, and tribal preparedness and response capabilities as well as to build and foster more resilient communities and individuals. HHS is establishing a comprehensive model for human services disaster planning, and continuing its work to prepare for, and respond to, international public health emergencies.

- **Foster Informed, Empowered Individuals and Communities**

HHS supports community empowerment in preparation for and during emergencies by assisting with efforts to develop community plans, building community capabilities for shelter, maintaining food, providing medical care and other services, and promoting active community engagement in local decision-making. HHS, in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), administers the [Federal Disaster Case Management Program](#) to create a coordinated system which enables an individual or family to receive support after a Presidentially declared disaster through a single point of contact for a wide variety of services provided by different organizations.

- **Support Preparedness and Response Efforts**

HHS is promoting efforts to develop a strong, well-trained workforce ready to provide an effective response to disasters and emergencies. HHS is working to improve health care providers' ability to respond to mass care situations while ensuring provision of the highest standard of care possible for the greatest number of patients. HHS is helping the public understand how they can care for themselves during an emergency, thus reducing demands on health care providers and ensuring that resources are invested where they are most needed. HHS is promoting an effective system for developing, manufacturing, and dispensing drugs, devices, and medical supplies for use in response to public health emergencies, as well as strategies for quickly obtaining scarce resources such as blood and other items that cannot be stockpiled. HHS is encouraging information sharing, surveillance, and coordinated action to reduce the emerging threats from common pathogens in our food, water, biologicals (blood, organs, tissue and vaccines), and air. HHS is working to improve communications across all sectors, from government emergency response systems to private sector and community-based organizations, especially with underserved populations, such as those with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities.

- **Support Recovery Efforts**

HHS actively supports the development of preparedness plans and community resilience before disaster strikes, in order to help communities recover successfully. To support recovery needs in a better, more coordinated way, the federal government worked with state, local, tribal, and territory agencies, non-government organizations and private industry to craft a [National Disaster Recovery Framework](#) led by FEMA. The framework recommends roles and activities for everyone involved in recovery including government agencies, non-government organizations, private businesses, and families. HHS's role is to coordinate federal agencies that can help local, state and tribal agencies

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restore public health, behavioral health, health care systems, and social services networks during and after emergencies.

- **Develop and Implement Evidence-based Strategies for Preparedness, Response, and Recovery**

HHS is working to ensure that all systems that support national health security are based upon the best available science, evaluation, and quality improvement methods. HHS is developing a research and evaluation agenda to support identification of standards, policy, and guidance to increase the knowledge base for preparedness, response, and recovery.

- **Work with Cross-Border and Global Partners to Enhance National and Global Health Security**

HHS is working closely with global partners to address common threats around the world, enhance national capacities to detect and respond to these threats, and learn from each other's experiences. When called on for help, HHS, acting in concert with other U.S. Government agencies, mobilizes and supports an immediate health-sector response to international outbreaks and public health emergencies. During and after international emergencies, HHS provides a wealth of scientific and technical expertise and international experience to investigate outbreaks, and to treat the sick and injured. HHS is collaborating with international partners to develop best practices and guidelines for responding to natural and man-made disasters, including a focus on improved coordination and response practices.

## ***Secretary's Strategic Initiatives***

### ***Implement a 21st Century Food Safety System***

Each year, 48 million Americans get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases, a significant and largely preventable, public health burden. President Obama signed The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act on January 4, 2011, shifting the focus of federal regulators from responding to contamination to preventing it. HHS is developing a food safety system that is flexible and responsive to current and emerging threats. Taking a proactive approach to product safety and quality, HHS has also expanded its global role in strengthening food and medical product regulatory systems and supporting the development of risk-based systems to target field operations to effectively identify and respond to food and feed concerns. The Department is working with multiple partners to ensure success, including state, local, tribal, territorial, and international authorities, the private and non-profit sectors, federal and foreign government partners, and the President's Food Safety Working Group.

- **Prevent Harm to Consumers from Foodborne Illness**

HHS has prioritized prevention and is implementing sensible strategies designed to prevent problems before they occur. HHS is setting rigorous, science-based standards for food safety and working with the food industry to ensure it meets these standards. For example, HHS is developing preventive control standards for food facilities and the production of fruits and vegetables that will require firms to evaluate the hazards that could affect food safety, implement controls to reduce these hazards, and develop plans for monitoring controls and performing corrective actions when needed. These standards will improve the safety of both domestic and imported foods. HHS has also taken steps to make it easier to protect consumers when problems emerge including implementing new mandatory recall authorities and providing more information to consumers about recalled foods and what they can do to protect themselves and their families when outbreaks occur. [Foodsafety.gov](http://foodsafety.gov) provides consumers with prevention information, and it uses social media to reach the widest audience.

- **Increase the Safety and Integrity of Global Manufacturing and Supply Chains**

HHS aims to enhance regulatory systems as well as global manufacturing and supply chains to ensure the safety of food and feed entering the United States. Key priorities include strengthening strategic regulatory partnerships to promote a safer, higher quality global supply of food and feed and implementing strategies to lessen vulnerabilities associated with regulatory gaps through cooperation with other governments and international agencies.

- **Improve Data Sources and Analysis for Effective Food Safety Inspections and Enforcement**

High-quality information from routine surveillance, outbreak investigations, and scientific studies helps to determine which foods are at highest risk and which solutions should be put into place to reduce risk. HHS is working together with its Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial regulatory and public health partners to enhance foodborne illness surveillance systems to more rapidly identify and respond to food safety problems, to determine if new and existing food safety policies work, and to improve prevention measures. To that end, HHS is collaborating with these partners, including the Partnership for Food Protection, to support efforts to create a nationally integrated food safety system. HHS is prioritizing crucial inspection and enforcement activities in the U.S. and across the world. To accomplish this, HHS is supporting safety efforts by states, localities, and businesses; and enhancing data collection and analysis to guide these efforts and evaluate results.

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- **Identify and Quickly Stop Outbreaks of Foodborne Illness**

HHS is working to limit the number, scale, and duration of foodborne disease outbreaks. HHS is collaborating with its federal, state, local, and tribal partners to strengthen public health and regulatory systems to enhance our ability to detect outbreaks faster, use food tracing systems to identify the source and distribution of products, quickly remove products from the market, and conduct root cause analysis to correct problems and inform future prevention efforts. Through mechanisms like [FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov), HHS is improving communications during an outbreak to better inform the public of risks, and following an outbreak to help restore consumer confidence in the food supply.

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### ***Accelerate the Process of Scientific Discovery to Improve Patient Care***

The path from basic scientific discovery to methods and technologies that improve patient care can be lengthy and complex. HHS is committed to promoting faster translation of research into practice, and ensuring that it meets the varying needs of diverse communities in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways. Accelerating this process can help HHS meet its goals, including promoting high-value, safe, and effective health care, eliminating health disparities, supporting informed decision-making, and ultimately, improving health outcomes.

- **Accelerate Biomedical Discovery through Innovation**

HHS is accelerating biomedical discovery through innovative methodologies and technology. HHS will continue to support fundamental discoveries that expand the knowledge base in the biomedical and behavioral sciences. HHS is accelerating scientific discovery by promoting ongoing cross-agency development of information systems capable of storing, organizing, and sharing vast amounts of data with researchers around the globe.

- **Catalyze Health Research Globally**

HHS and HHS-supported researchers are collaborating with scientists worldwide to understand all the factors that influence human health and to find new tools and effective approaches that will help diagnose, prevent, and control disease. HHS is studying individuals, populations, infectious organisms, and environmental and other risk factors with the ultimate goal of improving health in the United States and worldwide. This engagement allows us to exchange knowledge and best practices that can accelerate research and innovation, improve the health of people in the U.S. and abroad.

- **Enable Efficient Regulatory Review**

HHS is facilitating the fast-tracking of medical innovations to integrate biomedical research planning and regulatory review. HHS is supporting training of regulatory scientists to develop the skills necessary to integrate research planning and the regulation of resulting biomedical products. HHS is developing cross-agency initiatives to support regulatory science to enhance the safety, quality, and efficiency of clinical research and medical product approval.

- **Translate Novel Research Discoveries into Therapies**

HHS is exploring new partnerships that can help academic investigators translate basic science into new therapies—effectively “de-risking” projects for commercial development. HHS is providing researchers with large-scale screening resources to facilitate identification of small molecules that may have a beneficial effect against a disease target. HHS also is providing resources for preclinical evaluation of promising therapeutics, and is building a national network of clinical research centers to enable clinical trials of promising compounds.

- **Support the Science of Health Care Reform**

HHS supports patient-centered research to identify high-quality, high-value drugs, surgeries, and other treatment options. HHS supports research on personalized medicine, behavioral science, health economics, health disparities, and health services. Health services research is important to ensure the best evidence is used to improve health care delivery. By examining and enhancing the most effective ways to integrate preventive, screening, diagnostic, and treatment health services into community practice, HHS further supports more effective individualized prevention efforts, as well

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as methods to deliver the right care to the right patient at the right time, regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.

- **Disseminate Health Information to the Public**

HHS is developing a comprehensive plan for more effectively disseminating health information to the public. HHS is carefully examining the effectiveness of information tailored to underserved populations, which often have greater risk of certain diseases and conditions.

## ***Secretary's Strategic Initiatives***

### ***Promote Program Integrity, Accountability, and Transparency***

Using proven strategies and emerging innovations, HHS is working to ensure that we are responsible stewards of every taxpayer dollar in our budget. Across the department, HHS agencies are fighting fraud, waste, and abuse; ensuring our programs are operating effectively and efficiently; reducing unnecessary administrative burdens; improving access to data; and encouraging innovation, collaboration and creativity, to achieve our goal of improving the health and well-being of every American.

- **Promote Responsible Stewardship**

Reducing fraud, waste, and abuse in HHS programs is a top priority for the Department. The Council on Program Integrity is examining HHS efforts—from Medicare and Medicaid, to Head Start and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, to medical research and public health grants—and is conducting risk assessments to identify and address systemic vulnerabilities. HHS is enhancing existing program integrity efforts, exploring new strategies, sharing best practices, and measuring results. Concurrently, and without compromising program integrity, HHS is working to reduce unnecessary burdens on state, local, tribal and territorial governments that implement our programs, identifying program areas that could achieve better outcomes to taxpayers at lower cost. HHS is pursuing both short and long term strategies to promote administrative flexibility while improving outcomes.

- **Support Informed Decision-Making through Responsible Use of HHS Data**

HHS is making data available to the public to help generate insight into how to improve health and well-being, improve HHS performance, and provide the basis for new products and services. HHS also ensures that appropriate data privacy and security protections are in place. Through new efforts like [HealthCare.gov's Insurance Finder](#), the [Health Data Initiative](#), and [FDA-TRACK](#), HHS is making data available to consumers, health care providers, researchers, policymakers, and others to guide decision-making in many aspects of health and health care.

- **Foster Participation and Innovation**

HHS is cultivating a culture of innovation by encouraging our employees to submit new ideas and rewarding them through the [Secretary's Innovation Awards](#) Program, and by promoting stakeholder involvement in public competitions and crowd sourcing to help improve the delivery of consumer information on patient safety and health. Through our open government efforts, HHS is sharing information with the public to help stakeholders collaborate and contribute ideas for solutions to health, public health, and human services challenges.