



HHS and ED Launch Joint-Department Effort to Expand School-Based Health Services

health services, including how Medicaid can support the delivery of these services; help reduce federal administrative burden for states and localities, including local educational agencies and barriers to the provision of school-based physical and behavioral health services; and improve and strengthen access to physical and behavioral health services.

“Our nation’s children have been particularly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including significant impacts on their mental health,” said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra and ED Secretary Miguel A. Cardona. “Youth reports of psychological distress have doubled since the pandemic began, with 25 percent reporting depressive symptoms and 20 percent reporting anxiety symptoms. Children and youth with intellectual or developmental disabilities and those with prior childhood trauma

are at particular risk for pandemic-related mental health challenges, as are those who have faced previous discrimination in the healthcare system, including children and youth of color, immigrant children, children with disabilities and those who are LGBTQ+. While the pandemic’s long-term impacts on children and youth are not fully understood, working together to build resilience in children, youth and families can promote equity and support recovery efforts. We will elevate opportunities under the American Rescue Plan funding along with existing federal resources to build a lasting and sustainable healthcare infrastructure for our children and youth.” ❖

HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, Education Secretary Miguel A. Cardona Announce a Joint Effort to Develop and Share Resources to Ensure Children Have Access to School-Based Health Services. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services press release, March 24, 2022. Accessed at www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/03/24/hhs-secretary-xavier-becerra-education-secretary-miguel-a-cardona-announce-joint-effort-develop-share-resources-ensure-children-have-access-school-based-health-services.html.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and U.S. Education Department (ED) have launched a joint-department effort to expand school-based health services, ensuring children have the health services and support necessary to build resilience and thrive. The joint effort will provide additional technical assistance, resources and support to schools that will provide guidance on the federal funding available for school-based physical and behavioral

NIH Establishes Antiviral Drug Discovery Centers

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), a division of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), awarded approximately \$577 million to establish nine Antiviral Drug Discovery (AViDD) Centers for Pathogens of Pandemic Concern. The AViDD award underscores NIAID’s commitment to ongoing research into the cause, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases in the U.S. and worldwide.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for new antiviral drugs, especially those that could easily be taken by patients at home while their symptoms are still mild,” said NIAID Director Anthony S. Fauci, MD. Decades worth of research on the structure and vulnerabilities of coronaviruses prior to

the COVID-19 pandemic informed and accelerated the response to COVID-19. “We hope that similar research focused on antivirals will better prepare us for the next pandemic.”

The AViDD centers will conduct the groundbreaking, multidisciplinary research needed to develop candidate COVID-19 antivirals with an emphasis on those that can be taken in an outpatient setting, as well as enact a preemptive effort to develop antivirals targeting other viral families with high potential to cause a pandemic in the future. According to NIH, viral families to be studied include paraxoviruses, bunyaviruses, togaviruses, filoviruses (including Ebola viruses and Marburg virus), picornaviruses (including enteroviruses and other viruses that

cause the common cold) and flaviviruses (including those that cause yellow fever, dengue and Zika).

Research will include early-stage identification and validation of novel viral targets, as well as identification of small molecules and biotherapeutics that directly block viral targets. After being evaluated for potency and breadth, the most promising drug candidates will move on to late-stage preclinical development. Collaboration among AViDD centers is encouraged. Research will be supported with and accelerated by access to and use of industry partner resources such as chemical libraries and expertise in product development pipeline. ❖

NIH Announces Antiviral Drug Development Awards. National Institutes of Health press release, May 18, 2022. Accessed at www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-announces-antiviral-drug-development-awards.



HHS Launches the Inaugural PandemicX 2022 Cohort

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has launched the inaugural PandemicX 2022 cohort, a novel program to accelerate private-public collaboration comprised of 15 health technology startups. The PandemicX startups were selected through a rigorous process, 66 percent of which are both female-founded and minority-owned. The startup's proposed solutions align with federal health challenges and address health equity barriers and other disparities exacerbated by COVID-19 using data and innovation.

Through the six-month program, the startups had access to curriculum, mentorship, resources and other collaborations to scale their businesses and work toward creating actionable solutions to federal challenges, including health equity by design, national public health solutions, behavioral and mental health, socioeconomic outcome indicators and community resilience.

“The world needs technological and business innovation to increase equitable assets and to create a resilient society,” said Micky Tripathi, U.S. National

Coordinator for Health IT. “We know HealthTech startups are a force of good to help make wellness, health and wealth an accessible right, not a privilege. You cannot have health without resilience; you cannot have health without inclusion.”

A list of all the startups, including specific details, can be viewed at masschallenge.org/announcement/mcht22cohort. ❖

Inaugural PandemicX Accelerator Graduates Cohort Creating a Model for Future Public-Private Collaboration. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services press release, Aug. 18, 2022. Accessed at www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/08/18/inaugural-pandemicx-accelerator-graduates-cohort-creating-a-model-for-future-public-private-collaboration.html?utm_source=news-releases-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=august-21-2022.

HHS Awards \$1.5 Billion Grant to Combat Opioid Addiction

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is announcing a State Opioid Response (SOR) grant funding opportunity that will provide nearly \$1.5 billion to states and territories to help address the nation's opioid addiction and overdose epidemic. The SOR grant program provides formula funding to states and territories for increasing access to U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD) and for supporting prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery support services for OUD and other concurrent substance use disorders. It also supports care for stimulant misuse and use disorders, including for cocaine and methamphetamine. According to HHS, the program helps reduce overdose deaths and close the gap in treatment needs across America by giving states and territories flexibility in funding evidence-based practices and supports across different settings to meet local community needs.



“The State Opioid Response grant program delivers crucial aid to states and territories to help address in the crisis of overdose and death in our nation's communities,” said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra. “And, in line with HHS’ Overdose Prevention Strategy, this funding helps facilitate state- and territory-level efforts to ensure the full continuum of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and long-term recovery supports are in place and accessible to all who need them.”

Overdose deaths have accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, with data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimating that more than 105,000 people died from overdose in the 12 months ending in October 2021, the highest number ever recorded in a 12-month period. In addition to implementing service delivery models that enable the full spectrum of treatment and recovery support services, as well as prevention, education and harm reduction services, states and territories will be asked to develop naloxone distribution and saturation plans that will increase availability and accessibility of this lifesaving overdose-reversal medication.

The SOR grant will fund up to \$1,439,500,000 to be awarded in fiscal year 2022 to 59 states and territories. This funding includes a set-aside for the states with the highest OUD-related mortality rates. ❖

Biden Administration Announces \$1.5 Billion Funding Opportunity for State Opioid Response Grant Program. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services press release, May 19, 2022. Accessed at www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/05/19/biden-administration-announces-15-billion-funding-opportunity-state-opioid-response-grant-program.html.