

CARE POLICY INSIGHTS

CMMI Announces Updated Strategic Direction



The Big Picture

On May 13, the CMS Innovation Center (CMMI) released its updated strategic direction, "Strategy to Make America Healthy Again," outlining the agency's vision for transforming care delivery through prevention, empowerment, and competition. The strategy introduces a three-pillar framework and commits to revising all future and current CMCI models to align with this direction. **One of the most significant highlights from the Innovation Center's strategy is the explicit recognition of family caregivers.**

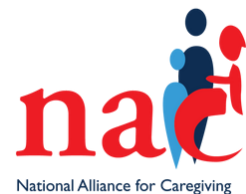
Caregiver Highlights

- **Explicit recognition of caregivers as a key population.** The strategy acknowledges "the growing cohort of Americans in their eighties and beyond — and often their caregivers" as a critical demographic served by Innovation Center programs.
- **Potential for direct caregiver payments.** CMS specifically mentions exploring "payments to caregivers to better support those experiencing cognitive or functional decline" as part of new waiver authorities for risk-bearing entities.
- **Focus on "days at home" as quality measure.** The strategy emphasizes metrics that matter to people, specifically highlighting "days at home for frail beneficiaries" — a measure directly influenced by caregiver support and capacity.
- **Expanded home-based care models.** CMS signals support for "virtual care and at-home care so people can receive care more flexibly," expanding the settings where family caregivers operate.
- **Data access and digital tools.** The strategy emphasizes "unlocking data access" and developing consumer tools that could significantly enhance caregiver care coordination capabilities.
- **Community-based prevention partnerships.** The Innovation Center plans to "engage community-based initiatives" in prevention efforts, creating potential pathways for caregiver support organizations.

Spotlight on the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers: This strategic direction by CMCI strongly aligns with the 2022 National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers, a landmark initiative providing a comprehensive roadmap to drive support for family caregivers across society. By explicitly recognizing caregivers, CMCI has the opportunity to advance the National Strategy's goals of increasing coordination and access to crucial support and services for family caregivers across health systems.

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What to Watch

CMMI's renewed emphasis on prevention, home-based care, and consumer empowerment aligns well with a more integrated approach to caregiver support. By framing caregiver initiatives as enablers of better outcomes and lower costs, stakeholders can leverage this strategic shift to advance caregiver-centered innovation within CMS payment models.

As the Innovation Center implements this approach, look for opportunities to...

- Integrate caregiver assessment into risk models for Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) and Medicare Advantage (MA) plans. This would incentivize providers to understand and address caregiver needs as part of their overall care strategy.
- Champion caregiver-specific quality measures that could be standardized across models, providing a clear way to measure the impact of caregiver support interventions.
- Explore new waiver authorities that specifically enable caregiver support services within value-based care arrangements, providing the regulatory framework for innovative programs.
- Elevate mobile and digital health tools designed with caregivers in mind, ensuring technology truly meets their unique needs for information, coordination, and support.
- Champion community partnerships – and payments – that bridge clinical and social support for caregivers, creating a seamless ecosystem of care.

Who Are Our Nation's Family Caregivers?

53+ million

Americans provide ongoing, complex care for older Americans, people with disabilities, and people with a serious illness.

40%

of family caregivers are in high intensity care situations, providing more than 24 hours of care per week.

25%

of family caregivers find it difficult to take care of their own health.