

# COVID-19 WEEKLY COMPENDIUM

MARCH 8, 2022 | YEAR 3, VOLUME 1

## COVID-19 - Two Years Later Resiliency, Gratitude and Hope

This issue marks the start of Year 3 of the COVID-19 Weekly Compendium. None of us had any idea when we started out what a long, exhausting journey this would be, and it's not over. We have seen examples of extreme kindness and empathy as well as the opposite, with selfishness and lack of concern for others. We have also seen many inequities in healthcare and other areas unveiled.

Two years living in a pandemic has been one of the most difficult challenges many of us have faced. Its impacts have been personal, public, global, and inarguably, unequally imposed. Some people yearn for a "return to normal," but this on-going ordeal has revealed inequalities that sustained those normal times. To dismiss or minimize the pain felt during this pandemic time is dishonest and callous, but to ignore the opportunity to address – possibly redress – our exposed deficiencies is to commit ourselves to a future worse than enduring waves of illness; such resignation allows the infections that weaken our communities to persevere and grow.

Although this pandemic has presented so many difficulties, it has also been a blessing to see how we have come together and found creative ways to enjoy life. The birthday parties that turned birthday parades, employers allowing work from home so parents could school their children, and the smiles that, though hidden by masks, gave new meaning to the term "smiling eyes."

The resiliency and leadership shown by Maine's community health centers has been nothing short of amazing. The compassionate care provided by health centers during the worst global pandemic in modern times serves as an inspiration to us all. We are grateful for the remarkable dedication of health centers, who have continued to combat COVID in addition to every other thing that they do. No matter what new challenge arises - testing, vaccination of adults, children, babies, Delta, Omicron - health center leadership and staff have never given up.

The lifting of the mask mandate in Maine last week provided feelings of hope and optimism that we might finally be finding our way out of the darkness. Living through this pandemic has created a strength within all of us that will forever be present. Thank you, for your continued dedication to providing care, support, and education to each other, your patients, and community. We owe you a debt of gratitude for keeping us safe and healthy during this very trying time. You are an inspiration to us all and we are proud to stand together with Maine's true health care heroes.

### CLINICAL UPDATES

[Pfizer/BioNTech COVID vaccine less effective in ages 5-11 - New York study](#) - Reuters (2/28)

[First Possible Case of Deer-to-Human COVID Transmission Identified](#) - Medscape (3/1)

### ORAL HEALTH UPDATE

[Impact of COVID-19 on Dental Hygienists](#) - PracticeUpdate (3/3)

For resources and information, please visit the [Oral Health Resources](#) section on the [MPCA website](#).

**Is Your Health Center Hiring?** Click [here](#) to utilize the MPCA Job Board and list your openings on our website!

## POLICY & COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

### **Healthcare Highlights from President Biden's State of the Union Address**

During last week's State of the Union address, President Biden never mentioned the Build Back Better Act by name, but he did speak briefly about some of the key health-related proposals in the bill, including:

- Reducing the cost of prescription drugs. The President specifically called for allowing Medicare to negotiate the price of drugs, and for capping patients' costs for insulin at \$35 a month.
- Making permanent the expanded subsidies for ACA plans that were enacted in the American Rescue Plan.
- The President stated, "Let's close the coverage gap", presumably referring to low-income persons in states that have not expanded Medicaid. However, he provided no details.
- Cracking down on fraud in Federal pandemic relief programs (e.g., the Paycheck Protection Program.)

The President also stated that "[COVID-19 need no longer control our lives](#)" and announced four steps to enable the country to "move forward safely":

- Continued focus on vaccines and treatments. As part of this, HHS is launching a "Test to Treat" initiative through which people can get tested at a pharmacy and, if they test positive, receive free antiviral pills on the spot. HHS will also invest in sustained manufacturing of COVID-19 tests, and will stockpile at-home COVID tests, masks, and anti-viral pills.
- Prepare for new variants. This will include speeding up the vaccine development process and stockpiling tests, masks, and pills.
- End the shutdown of schools and businesses.
- Continue sharing vaccines with other countries.

Finally, President Biden proposed a four-prong "United Agenda for the Nation"; three of those prongs related directly to health care:

- Beat the opioid crisis, including through increased funding for prevention and treatment, and making it easier for providers to prescribe buprenorphine.
- Expanding mental health care, particularly for children. This includes ensuring parity for mental health coverage, and "hold[ing] social media platforms accountable for the national experiment they're conducting on our children for profit."
- Bio-medical research to "end cancer as we know it" and address other issues such as Alzheimer's and diabetes.

### **FY2022 Appropriations Update**

With less than a week until the current Continuing Resolution (CR) expires on March 11, Congress continues to negotiate on all twelve appropriations bills that would fund the Federal government for the remainder of FY2022. Appropriators have been hoping to combine all twelve bills into a single giant package – called an omnibus – to be passed before the March 11 deadline, to avoid the need for another CR. If all twelve appropriations bills are not passed by March 11, Congress will need to pass another CR to continue funding the government. If some – but not all – of the twelve bills are passed, the CR will apply only to those agencies that have yet to receive a full appropriation

## CDC UPDATES

[Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Approved or Authorized in the US](#) - (2/22)

[Most Children and All Teens Can Get COVID-19 Vaccines](#) - (1/11)

[What to Know About COVID-19 Testing in Schools](#) - (2/24)

[Domestic Travel During COVID-19](#) - (2/25)

*What's happening? Click [here](#) for a full listing of upcoming MPCA trainings and events.*

## INTERESTING READS

[Masks Now Optional for 90% of US As Risk Lessens: CDC](#) - Medscape (3/4)

New metrics for measuring the threat of COVID-19 show that more than 90% of people in the United States now live in counties with a low to medium threat and generally don't need to wear face masks anymore.

[Five Million Children Have Lost a Caregiver to COVID-19](#) - Medscape (2/25)

By Oct. 31, 2021, more than 5 million people worldwide had died from COVID-19, and about 5.2 million children had lost a parent or caregiver, according to new research published in the [Lancet Child and Adolescent Health](#).

[What's Holding Up the COVID Vaccines for Children Under 5?](#) - Medscape (3/3)

As the United States relaxes pandemic restrictions, advising some [70% of Americans](#) they no longer need to wear a mask, many parents of young children are desperate to know when they can expect a vaccine to be authorized for kids under 5.

[Biden's 'test to treat' covid plan draws praise, questions](#) - The Washington Post (3/4)

Consumers will be able to walk into a clinic at a CVS or Walgreens, get tested for the coronavirus and, if the results come back positive, go home with a free course of antiviral medicine under a "test to treat" program announced by President Biden this week as part of his new pandemic road map.

[Health experts urge against COVID-19 complacency: 12 calls to action from their new 136-page plan](#) - Becker's Hospital Review (3/7)

A team of 53 epidemiologists, pharmacologists, virologists, immunologists, and policy experts published a 136-page report on the heels of the new COVID-19 preparedness plan released by the White House. Their plan shares similarities with that from the Biden administration but also differences, such as broadening the nation's response to include all major respiratory viruses.

## HEALTH EQUITY/SOCIAL DETERMINANTS AND TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE RESOURCES

**The New England Public Health Training Center presents  
Our Voice: Harnessing Local Expertise to Create Healthier Communities**

Thursday, March 17 | 12:00 - 1:00 PM | [Registration](#)

The Stanford Our Voice Initiative offers community groups tools and resources to help harness and activate this wisdom and create healthier communities for all. During this session we will walk through the Our Voice approach and highlight the inspiring work of a Denver grandma turned "streetfighter," who has used data and built collaborations to generate changes that support healthy living in the Montbello neighborhood of Denver, Colorado.

**The Weitzman Institute presents Reimagining Primary Care through a Health Justice Lens**

Wednesday, May 4 | 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM | [Registration and Agenda](#)

The Symposium offers a forum for exploring primary care's challenge of dismantling persistent inequities and recreating and advocating for a more just healthcare system that better meets the needs of its workforce, patients, and communities, particularly those most in need.

[Black Americans are now dying from drug overdoses at a higher rate than whites](#) - NPR (3/2)

When the first phase of the opioid epidemic was cresting in 2010, driven largely by prescription pain medications, white Americans were dying of fatal drug overdoses at rates twice that of Black Americans. In the decade that followed, drug deaths surged again. But this time Black communities faced the brunt of the carnage.

For resources and information, please visit the [Health Equity/Social Determinants Resources](#) section on the [MPCA website](#).

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## BILLING, CODING & TELEHEALTH NEWS

For updates from insurers and other relevant information, please visit the [Telehealth Resources](#) section on the [MPCA website](#).

## WORKFORCE UPDATE

For resources and information, please visit the [Workforce](#) section on the [MPCA website](#).

## CHCNET NEWS

For the latest information concerning the MPCA's HCCN, **Community Health Center Network of Maine (CHCNet)**, or for support with health information technology needs, please visit the [CHCNet Member Portal](#) or contact Michael Pancook: [mpancook@mepca.org](mailto:mpancook@mepca.org).

## RESOURCES ADDENDUM

[AFTER HOURS](#) - MPCA Office Hours resources

For the **Stay Informed, Sign Up, Maine Helps**, and **Coping and Stress Resources** information, please visit the [Compendium Resources Addendum](#) section on the [MPCA website](#).

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**Join MPCA on Slack!** We are building our communication outreach capacity between meetings using the Slack communication platform. Many of you are already connected with us in several peer groups including our **Clinical Channel** and our **Billing & Coding Channel**. Please feel free to reach out to [it@mepca.org](mailto:it@mepca.org) for help with joining.