



**Network for
Regional Healthcare
Improvement**

Communicating with Federal Policy Makers in 2021

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Hot Topics in 2021

All topics are second to **structural racism** and **health equity**- these two issues must be addressed when looking at all other health policies.

- COVID-19- stabilization, control of the virus, stimulus dollars to health disparities, economic instability, fragility of employer-based markets, food insecurity, public health infrastructure
- Care delivery- Telehealth- waivers and expansion and studying what is working and what is not
- Surprise medical billing
- Drug pricing
- Maternal & child health
- Data sharing- interoperability
- Future of the healthcare workforce



How Congress Works & Working with Congress

HP & Congress

- In an ideal state, the president proposes his budget and Congress creates a Budget Resolution Committee to create benchmarks for allocations and appropriations- this is where advocacy then begins
- We will see a continuation of short-term resolutions through Q1 with Biden
- Emergency supplemental funding- is outside of the process of working with the BRC
- ESF & COVID- current focus vaccination distribution

Working with Congress

- In 2021 during the pandemic send letters to staffers- they want to hear from constituents and have had far less interaction- just remember to link to their vision as it relates to budget and economic priorities
- When working with Congress be prepared to move quickly and to provide accuracy, use data!
- Another important vehicle for health policy is to testify in front of the Senate HELP Committee

The Executive Branch and Health Policy

HHS drives health policy and is second to the President's agenda.

The president has promises on the line, gets the media coverage, starts the budget process, and influences judicial action.

The core of HHS- is comprised of highly trusted advisors who are experts positioned to serve and are bipartisan, very few are presidential appointments.



The Role of the Private Sector

Examples of driving change with COVID-19 response

- **AHA:**
 - Relief bills, PPE supply chain
- **AAMC:**
 - COVID Response Roadmap- 9 short-term strategies, 2 long-term, continued support for advancing research
- **American Health Information Management Association:**
 - SDoH, health disparities & inequities

Outside of COVID-19 Response

Example- large employers tackling healthcare costs

COVID-19 Issues- Medicare & Medicaid

Medicare

63 million beneficiaries

COVID-19 coverage:

- Testing, treatment, vaccination, telemedicine
- Payment/reimbursement has been challenged

Nursing homes and SNF have been very hard hit- partly due to increased CMS guidance on infection control- not enough \$\$\$ to support requirements

Medicaid

75 million beneficiaries

- 8.4% increase in enrollees between Feb-July 2020
- 55% of beneficiaries are racial minorities
- Workforce shortages in Medicaid staff (not all have been able to be remote-competing priorities)
- Destabilization of provider networks
- Unpredictable utilization
- Higher costs to providers
- Increased burden on hospitals and SNFs
- Economic downturn results in budget cuts- estimating \$200 billion in shortfalls between 2020-2022
- States mandated to balance their budgets

Communicating with Federal Policy Makers

Key Definitions:

- Advocacy= activity to influence policy
- Lobbying= asking policy makers to act on specific legislation

Policy makers rely on hill staffers.

Hill staffers rely on trusted resources.

- Examples:
 - CBO
 - experts
 - briefings
 - agencies

Hill Staffers Will Take Meetings With...



Those who provide:

- Reliable info
- Have existing relationships with
- Are doing relevant and current work
- Right now, the topic is equitable COVID-19 vaccine deployment.

Helpful Tips for Successful Meetings

Hill staffers prefer

- Email- send an email and ask for a phone call- they have Zoom fatigue

Other important tips:

- Know your audience, political viewpoint, current things they are working on and with who
- Seek to emphasize areas of agreement/options to achieve desired outcomes
- Ask questions!
- Have a request
- Communication “*mad lib*”- fill in the problem, the impact on the solution, the solution, the story, and make a clear ask

For effective
communication

S- imple and clear

U- nexpected

C- oncrete

C- redible

E- motional

S- hare stories

If you need additional advocacy support from NRHI, or you have questions, please contact jritzo@nrhi.org.

Much of the content was compiled from various experts, presentations, and resources made available through AcademyHealth's 2020 Health Policy Orientation

