

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

Trump Budget Would Cut \$636 Billion From HHS Agencies

As part of his \$4 trillion budget for next year, President Donald Trump is proposing a \$636 billion cut in federal funding for CMS programs over the next decade. The cuts are intended to make room for more spending on defense and border security. The budget also proposes deep cuts to Medicaid—about \$800 billion over the next decade.

The savings would come from transforming Medicaid into a per capita cap program starting in 2020. Medicare is not directly cut in the budget, allowing the President to maintain part of his campaign promise not to touch either entitlement program despite federally subsidized healthcare being one of the biggest contributors to the national debt. Trump's budget extends funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program as well, which is up for renewal at the end of this year. States, howev-

er, would lose the enhanced match provided by the Affordable Care Act. The law gave states a 23-percentage-point bump in federal matching rates. The draft budget also ends a provision that has prevented states from narrowing the pool of eligible CHIP beneficiaries below what it was in 2010, the first year the ACA went into effect.

The proposed budget still needs to be passed by Congress, which is unlikely to happen in its current form. Other changes include repealing the Independent Payment Advisory board, a panel that was created in the ACA whose purpose was to rein in Medicare costs if the program reached insolvency. That move would garner \$7.6 billion in administrative costs over 10 years, according to the budget proposal.

The President's plan promises that overhauling the tax code and easing regulations will lift

economic growth from the lackluster 2.1% average rate of recent years to sustained annual gains of 3% or higher. Trump's plan folds in more than \$2 trillion in unspecified deficit savings over the coming decade from "economic feedback" to promise balance.

Diana Zuckerman, president of the National Center for Health Research, does not expect Congress, which was generous to the institutes earlier this month, to support Trump's cuts. "I have never known Congress that enthusiastically cut NIH funding," she said. The administration is prioritizing opioid abuse prevention efforts, combating childhood obesity, vaccine stockpiling and investing in CDC infrastructure. The budget also proposes a 17% cut to the CDC's sexually transmitted disease and tuberculosis prevention efforts. Chronic disease prevention and health promotion would be cut by 19%.

Few Doctors Discuss Cancer Costs With Patients

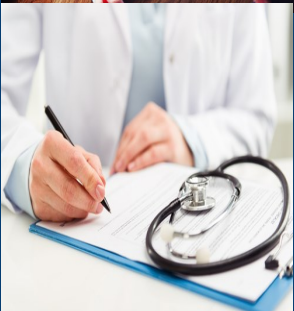
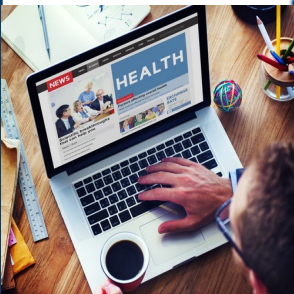
Study results presented by the American Society of Clinical Oncology find that most doctors did not discuss the cost of cancer treatment with patients, and when they did, they spent less than two minutes doing so.

For the study, researchers taped 529 conversations between doctors and patients with various types of cancer at three outpatient clinic locations. Patients and doctors knew they were being taped but weren't given the reason. In total, cost came up in 151 of the visits, with patients bringing it up in 106 visits, and

doctors bringing it up in the remaining 45. Discussions on cost ran one to two minutes of visit time. Even when doctors acknowledged a cost concern, they rarely acted on it and only six patients were referred to social services to seek help with affording the care.

"Maybe a lot of patients don't know to ask questions about cost," said Karla Mees, 63, a nursing instructor from Rochester, Minn., who was treated for breast cancer at the Mayo Clinic. Doctors also may be reluctant to talk money and have to give medical issues top priority in the

short amount of time they have during patient visits, said Dr. Lowell Schnipper, a cancer expert at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and head of the cancer group's panel on value in cancer care. "Most of us are not very well skilled in bringing it up," he said. "In school you're trained to simply take the best care you can of your patient and not worry about anything other than doing exactly that." He said the tool launched in 2015 by the cancer society describing the benefit a cancer drug gives vs. its cost is a good starting point for money talks.



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