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Connecting Constituents to Health Information and Services: Resources for Congressional Offices

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Connecting Constituents to Health Information and Services: Resources for Congressional Offices

SUMMARY

R48191

November 20, 2026

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As part of their representational activities, Members of Congress and their staffs provide a range of information and services to constituents. Some constituent communications reflect concerns about health and health care. Constituents may have, for example, difficulty finding and using health coverage; questions about finding health providers and facilities; hardships related to medical costs; requests for information on diseases, conditions, or treatments; or complaints about health providers, facilities, and products. To address these concerns, congressional offices may refer eligible constituents to various federal, state, and local resources and programs.

This report compiles selected resources and contacts that congressional offices can use when responding to constituents' inquiries regarding health and health care concerns. When possible, it lists federally funded referral services that provide individual assistance to constituents and matches specific circumstances to relevant federal, state, or local programs. Congressional offices may refer constituents to these online resources or inform them that they may discuss their specific situations with trained staff at the listed hotlines to seek help with identifying and accessing programs, resources, and benefits relevant to their needs.

This report is organized into five sections, with resources and contacts for

- finding and using health coverage;
- finding health providers and facilities;
- assistance with financial hardship related to medical costs;
- finding information on diseases, conditions, and treatments; and
- filing complaints about health care providers, facilities, products, insurance, and fraud.

The **Appendix** lists selected CRS reports for congressional clients seeking (1) additional resources to support their work with constituents and (2) background on some of the programs and policy issues mentioned in this report. This report is not intended to be a comprehensive catalog of all relevant resources and contacts; rather, it emphasizes federal or federally supported resources and hotlines to address constituents' frequently asked questions.

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Introduction

As part of their representational activities, Members of Congress and their staffs provide a range of information and services to constituents. Some constituent communications reflect concerns about health and health care, such as problems finding or using health coverage, questions about finding health providers and facilities, difficulties with paying for medical care, hardships related to health conditions, and complaints about health providers, facilities, and products. To address these concerns, congressional offices may refer eligible constituents to various federal, state, and local programs and resources.

This report compiles selected resources and contacts that congressional offices can use when responding to constituents' inquiries regarding health and health care concerns. When possible, it lists federally funded referral services that provide individual assistance to constituents and matches specific circumstances to relevant federal, state, or local programs. Congressional offices may refer constituents to these online resources or inform them that they may discuss their specific situations with trained staff at the listed hotlines to seek help with identifying and accessing programs, resources, and benefits relevant to their needs.

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The **Appendix** lists selected CRS reports for congressional clients seeking (1) additional resources to support their work with constituents and (2) background on some of the programs and policy issues mentioned in this report.

This report is not intended to be a comprehensive catalog of all relevant resources; rather, it emphasizes selected federal or federally funded resources for questions that constituents frequently ask.

Resources and Contacts on Health Coverage

The information and contacts below may help congressional offices reply to consumers with questions about finding health coverage and problems with using their specific health coverage.

General Resources on Finding and Understanding Health Coverage

Some constituents may be eligible for free or low-cost coverage through Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or private coverage through health insurance exchanges (also called marketplaces). The resources below, maintained by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), can help constituents learn about and apply for such coverage.[1]

[1] CRS Report R47351, *Noncitizens' Access to Health Care*, summarizes health coverage options and eligibility for noncitizens, including authorized and unauthorized immigrants, which may differ from options for U.S. citizens.

- *HealthCare.gov (1-800-318-2596)*
  https://www.healthcare.gov/
  This website and hotline connect constituents to the relevant federal or state health insurance exchange (marketplace), where constituents can learn if they may be eligible for Medicaid, CHIP, or the exchange's private health plans (as well as premium and cost-sharing subsidies). Constituents can also compare health plans and apply for coverage. Assistance is available in multiple languages.
- *HealthCare.gov: Find Local Help*
  https://www.healthcare.gov/find-local-help/
  This online directory identifies state and local organizations and "assisters" trained to help constituents understand their health coverage options (including private coverage, Medicaid, and CHIP), determine eligibility for premium and cost-sharing subsidies, and provide enrollment assistance. The directory also includes insurance agents and brokers.

In general, health plan enrollees may contact their plans directly to verify enrollment or to ask about coverage of specific drugs, medical services, and health care providers. Enrollees can find their health plan's customer service phone number on their insurance card or on the health plan's website. Below are additional resources maintained by CMS that provide contacts for health coverage questions and problems.

- *Consumer Assistance Program*
  https://www.cms.gov/cciio/resources/consumer-assistance-grants
  This website provides an interactive map of state-level contacts for assistance with health insurance questions. Some states operate Consumer Assistance Programs (CAPs), where staff can assist with health insurance problems and questions. For states with no CAP, the map links to other contacts for resolving health insurance problems, such as the state insurance department or Medicaid agency.
- *Coverage to Care*
  https://www.cms.gov/priorities/health-equity/c2c
  This website provides consumer booklets and videos on using health coverage to get care. Topics include "Navigate Your Coverage," "Access Care," and "Manage Your Chronic Condition," among others. Some resources have been translated to other languages.
- *Find a patient advocate*
  https://www.cms.gov/initiatives/your-patient-rights/medical-bill-rights/get-help/guides-resources/find-patient-advocate
  This website has tips and resources for finding a patient advocate. For constituents with chronic or serious health conditions, patient advocates can help navigate the health care system, for example by helping patients communicate with insurers and providers to obtain needed care.[2]

[2] According to the National Cancer Institute, a *patient advocate* is a "person who helps guide a patient through the healthcare system. This includes help going through the screening, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up of a medical condition, such as cancer. A patient advocate helps patients communicate with their healthcare providers so they get the information they need to make decisions about their health care. Patient advocates may also help patients set up appointments for doctor visits and medical tests and get financial, legal, and social support. They may also work with insurance companies, employers, case managers, lawyers, and others who may have an effect on a patient's healthcare (continued...)

Types of Health Coverage

Private Health Insurance

Private Health Insurance (PHI) is the most common form of health coverage in the United States. PHI plans are subject to federal and state requirements. PHI plan enrollees generally obtain their coverage through either, or occasionally both, of the following sources: an employment setting (group plans) or directly from an insurer (nongroup plans). The nongroup market (also called the individual market) and the small-group market include plans sold on and off the health insurance exchanges. The **Appendix** includes CRS reports that provide background information on this topic.

- *Employee Benefits Security Administration: Ask EBSA* (1-866-444-3272)
  https://beta.dol.gov/about/agencies/ebsa/ask-ebsa
  This website connects constituents with benefit advisors at the U.S. Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA). Benefit advisors can respond to questions about an enrollee's job-based health coverage. Constituents can also submit their questions or complaints through an online form available on this website. EBSA can assist with "self-insured" plans, which are typically health insurance plans received through large employers or employers with locations in more than one state or country.
- *Mental Health Treatment: What Does Health Insurance Cover?*
  https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/how-to-pay-for-treatment/know-what-your-insurance-covers
  This website from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides guidance on how to identify an enrollee's mental health and substance abuse treatment coverage under their existing health plan. Most private health insurance plans cover mental health and substance abuse treatment. However, not all plans cover such treatment, and some will cover only certain levels of care.

Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Medicaid and CHIP are means-tested health coverage programs for certain low-income populations. Each state designs and administers its own Medicaid and CHIP programs within federal guidelines. Eligibility criteria and benefits vary by state. Medicaid finances primary and acute medical services, as well as long-term services and supports. CHIP provides health coverage to certain children and pregnant people with family incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid. The following resources, provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, help constituents identify offices and information on CHIP and Medicaid. The **Appendix** includes CRS reports that provide background on these programs.

- *Where Can People Get Help With Medicaid & CHIP?*
  https://www.medicaid.gov/about-us/where-can-people-get-help-medicaid-chip
  This website lists state program websites and contacts for determining Medicaid and CHIP eligibility, applying for Medicaid or CHIP, and getting assistance with

needs. Also called patient navigator." National Cancer Institute, *Dictionary of Cancer Terms*, https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/patient-advocate.

other related questions and problems. If a state agency cannot help, the CMS headquarters number for Medicaid questions is 877-267-2323.[3]

- *CMS Regional Offices*
  https://www.cms.gov/about-cms/where-we-are/regional-offices
  This website lists email addresses for CMS regional offices that can help answer beneficiaries' questions and concerns. Among its other duties, CMS is the federal agency that provides federal administrative guidance and oversight for Medicaid and CHIP. However, the state Medicaid agency is often a better first point of contact. See CMS's "You Must Contact Your State Medicaid Agency to:" at https://www.medicaid.gov/about-us/where-can-people-get-help-medicaid-chip.
- *InsureKidsNow.gov (1-877-KIDS-NOW or 1-877-543-7669)*
  https://www.insurekidsnow.gov/coverage
  This website and hotline can assist constituents with questions about Medicaid and CHIP health and dental coverage for children. The site also lists each state's CHIP and Medicaid contact information.

Medicare

Medicare is a federal program that pays for covered health care services of qualified beneficiaries. It was established in 1965 under Title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide health insurance to individuals aged 65 and older, and it has been expanded over the years to include permanently disabled individuals under the age of 65. Medicare, which consists of four parts (A-D), covers hospitalizations, physician services, prescription drugs, skilled nursing facility care, home health visits, and hospice care, among other services. Generally, individuals are eligible for Medicare if they or their spouse worked for at least 40 quarters in Medicare-covered employment, are aged 65 or older, and are a citizen or permanent resident of the United States. Individuals may also qualify for coverage if they are a younger person who cannot work because they have a medical condition that is expected to last at least one year or result in death, or have end-stage renal disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or transplant). The **Appendix** includes CRS reports that provide additional background on this program.

- *Medicare.gov*
  https://www.medicare.gov/
  This website provides extensive information about Medicare basics, coverage, providers and services, claims and appeals, and help options.
- *Medicare & You*
  https://www.medicare.gov/medicare-and-you
  This handbook is a beneficiary's guide to Medicare. Available in print and electronic formats, this resource is updated each fall and has information about Medicare benefits, costs, rights, and protections. Beneficiaries are mailed print copies, and downloads are available in a variety of formats and languages.
- *State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)*
  https://www.shiphelp.org/
  This resource focuses on SHIPs, which provide local, in-depth, and objective insurance counseling and assistance to Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and caregivers. Click "Find Your Local SHIP" to select the applicable state and view contact information and state-level websites.

[3] Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, *Contact Us*, https://www.medicaid.gov/about-us/contact-us.

- *Medicare.gov: Contact Medicare*
  https://www.medicare.gov/talk-to-someone
  This interactive resource facilitates opportunities for individuals to talk or live chat with a professional about Medicare issues. It provides answers to questions about Medicare and includes contacts for topics such as enrollment, complaints and appeals, and Medicare costs and options. Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227); TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.
- *Medicare.gov: Get help with costs*
  https://www.medicare.gov/basics/costs/help
  These sources help Medicare beneficiaries discover savings programs for premiums, manage prescription drug costs, and lower health plan costs.

Military Health System

The Military Health System (MHS) provides health care to military personnel, retirees, and their families in Department of Defense (DOD) hospitals and clinics—known as military treatment facilities—and through civilian health care providers participating in TRICARE, a DOD-administered health insurance-like program. (The Department of Defense is "using a secondary Department of War designation," under Executive Order 14347, dated September 5, 2025.) The **Appendix** includes a CRS report that provides additional background information on this topic.

- *Military Health System Customer Service Community Directory*
  https://tricare.mil/PatientResources/MHS-Customer-Service-Directory
  This website has a directory of TRICARE Contractor Customer Service hotlines. It also has a directory of Patient Advocates, Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinators, and Debt Collection Assistance Officers at military hospitals and clinics.
- *About the MHS: Contact Us*
  https://health.mil/About-MHS/Contact-Us
  This website has contact forms, hotlines, and frequently asked questions on topics such as reporting fraud and accessing medical records.
- *TRICARE: Patient Resources: Contact Us*
  https://tricare.mil/PatientResources/ContactUs
  This website has a "Call Us" tool to identify appropriate contacts, such as phone numbers for nurse advice, dental questions, eligibility questions, and more. The site also has provider directories, forms for asking benefit questions, instructions for filing complaints, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides health care and health-related services through the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). VHA's primary mission is to provide health care services to eligible veterans. It also provides health care to some family members through the Civilian Health Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA). See the **Appendix** for additional CRS products that provide background information about this agency.

- *VA: Contact Us*
  https://www.va.gov/contact-us/
  This portal provides online and phone contact information for a variety of VA services, including health contacts. This site also includes options to send messages online: use the "Ask VA" (https://www.va.gov/contact-us/ask-va)

option for general questions or the "Messages" feature through a "My HealtheVet" account (https://www.va.gov/health-care/send-receive-messages). Users must create a verified account to access both services. The VA health benefits hotline is 877-222-8387, and the My HealtheVet help desk is 877-327-0022. The Veterans Crisis Line (https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/) can be reached by dialing 988, then pressing 1.

- *Find VA Locations: Health Services*
  https://www.va.gov/find-locations/?facilityType=health
  This website allows users to search by location for VA health facilities and includes the ability to narrow by service type (e.g., mental health, women's health).
- *VA Health Care*
  https://www.va.gov/health-care/
  This website is intended primarily for veterans, and it provides links to health care resources, locations, and extensive benefit information.

Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB)

FEHB provides health insurance to many federal employees, retirees, and their dependents. Current Members of Congress and certain congressional staff are not eligible to enroll in plans offered under FEHB as employees but may be eligible to enroll in retirement. For additional background information, see the **Appendix**.

- *Contact Healthcare & Insurance*
  https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/contact-healthcare-insurance/
  This U.S. Office of Personnel Management website lists contacts for FEHB questions, complaints, and disputes. In many cases, FEHB enrollees can pose their initial questions to their employing agency Human Resources Office or their health plan.

Indian Health Service (IHS)

IHS, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is responsible for providing federal health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives. For additional information on this topic, see the **Appendix**.

- *IHS: For Patients*
  https://www.ihs.gov/forpatients/
  This portal allows patients to gather a variety of health-related information, including information on health topics, health care, personal health records, and patient forms.
- *IHS: Find Health Care*
  https://www.ihs.gov/findhealthcaremap/
  This website provides search box and map options to locate Indian Health Service, Tribal, or Urban Indian Health Program facilities. Users can narrow their search to specific facility types, including dental clinics and behavioral health facilities.
- *IHS: Contact Information*
  https://www.ihs.gov/contact/

This website provides specific forms regarding website issues or claims status. Public Affairs Office contact information is also provided.

- *IHS: Frequently Asked Questions*
  https://www.ihs.gov/forpatients/faq/
  This compilation of basic questions applicable to individuals seeking health care and benefits through the agency includes information regarding eligibility, access, and complaints.

Resources and Contacts for Finding Health Care Providers and Facilities

Constituents may seek help with finding local health care facilities or providers. In addition to the sources below, which provide initial assistance, a number of states offer tools that may help congressional offices respond to such requests. Constituents may also be provided with information to contact their health insurance (e.g., private health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid) to identify providers and determine if providers are in-network or accept their insurance.

Finding Health Care Professionals and Facilities

- *MedlinePlus: Directories*
  https://medlineplus.gov/directories/
  This National Library of Medicine (NLM) website provides links to directories to help constituents find libraries, health professionals, services, and facilities. NLM does not endorse or recommend the organizations that produce these directories, nor the individuals or organizations that are included in the directories.
- *Healthcare.gov: Getting regular medical care*
  https://www.healthcare.gov/using-marketplace-coverage/getting-medical-care/
  This website provides tips on locating providers who participate in an individual's health plan.
- *Medicare.gov: Find & compare providers near you*
  https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/
  This tool can be used to find and compare different types of Medicare providers, including physicians, hospitals, and nursing homes.
- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Health Care Providers & Facilities*
  https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/health-care-facilities/index.html
  This listing of governmental sources allows users to locate health care providers and facilities and compare options. The list includes free or low-cost care (Health Resources & Services Administration), Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers (National Institutes of Health, or NIH), Cancer Centers (NIH), and Mammography Certified Facilities (FDA).
- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Choosing a Doctor: Quick Tips*
  https://odphp.health.gov/myhealthfinder/doctor-visits/regular-checkups/choosing-doctor-quick-tips
  This guide offers suggestions for patients on how to choose and evaluate their primary care doctor.

- *Health Care Practitioners databases in State Agency Databases*
  https://godort.libguides.com/healthpractionerdbs
  This compilation of state databases is maintained by the American Library Association's Government Documents Round Table and includes links to state-specific sources of information regarding various health professionals. Database content varies by state, but constituents can often use these databases to verify a health professional's license and to check for disciplinary actions.

Resources and Contacts for Financial Hardship

The contacts and information below may help congressional offices respond to constituents facing financial hardship due to medical costs. These resources can also help constituents find information on free or low-cost health care and general financial support. For information on assisting uninsured constituents, see the "General Resources on Finding and Understanding Health Coverage" section.

Finding Help with Medical Bills or Medical Debt

The following resources may help constituents facing hardship with medical bills or medical debt.

- *Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Call the No Surprises Help Desk (1-800-985-3059)*
  https://www.cms.gov/initiatives/your-patient-rights/medical-bill-rights/get-help
  The CMS No Surprises Help Desk and website can provide "answers about your medical billing situation." The No Surprises Act protects consumers from certain unexpected out-of-network medical bills.[4] Help Desk staff can help constituents determine whether the No Surprises Act applies to their situation. If constituents believe that their provider or insurer is not following relevant billing rules, they can submit a complaint. The Help Desk can also direct constituents to other resources and agencies if their billing situation is not covered by the No Surprises Act. Phone assistance is available in multiple languages. Constituents can also use online forms to ask questions, submit complaints, and dispute bills.
- *Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Apply for medical bill financial assistance*
  https://www.cms.gov/initiatives/your-patient-rights/medical-bill-rights/get-help/guides-resources/apply-financial-assistance
  From the No Surprises Help Desk, this page describes options for obtaining assistance with hospital bills.
- *Consumer Financial Protection Bureau: Is there financial help for my medical bills?*
  https://www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/is-there-financial-help-for-my-medical-bills-en-2124/
  This Consumer Financial Protection Bureau website has tips for how to ask about and apply for hospital financial assistance programs. Some states have charity care laws that require certain hospitals to provide free or discounted care to eligible patients. Federal law also generally requires nonprofit hospitals to have a

[4] CRS Report R46856, *Surprise Billing in Private Health Insurance: Overview of Federal Consumer Protections and Payment for Out-of-Network Services*, summarizes consumer protections in the No Surprises Act (P.L. 116-260, Division BB, Title I).

written Financial Assistance Policy and a written Emergency Medical Care policy.[5]

- *Federal Trade Commission: Consumer Advice: Debt Collection FAQs*
  https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/debt-collection-faqs
  This Federal Trade Commission website provides answers to questions that constituents may have about debt collection, including medical debt collection. In particular, this resource provides information about consumer rights under the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.
- *MedlinePlus: Financial Assistance*
  https://medlineplus.gov/financialassistance.html
  This National Library of Medicine website provides curated resources and tips for paying for health care. For example, it notes that "you can also discuss concerns about paying your medical bills with your health care provider, social worker or the business office of your clinic or hospital" and links to patient handouts such as "Eight ways to cut health care costs."
- *National Institutes of Health: Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center: Access care and pay for related costs*
  https://resources.rarediseases.info.nih.gov/Resources/s/article/Access-care-pay-costs
  This National Institutes of Health information center has compiled resources on affording medical care. Many of the listed organizations assist with a wide range of serious medical conditions, not just genetic and rare diseases. Constituents can also contact the center, where staff can refer them to additional resources for their specific needs.

Finding Free or Low-Cost Health Care

The resources below can help constituents find free or affordable health services in their communities.

- *Health Resources & Services Administration: Get Health Care*
  https://www.hrsa.gov/get-health-care
  The "Get Affordable Healthcare" section of this Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) website includes directories for (1) health centers, which have sliding fee scales and serve people regardless of insurance status or ability to pay; (2) Hill-Burton facilities, which are required to provide a certain amount of free or below-cost health care to people who meet income guidelines; and (3) Ryan White Programs, which provide health care and support services to eligible people living with HIV/AIDS.

Specialized Health Services

The resources below provide information on free or low-cost specialized health services related to maternal and child health, family planning, dental health, behavioral health, eye health, HIV/AIDs, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). (Some of the contacts and websites in the

[5] Internal Revenue Service, *Financial Assistance Policy and Emergency Medical Care Policy – Section 501(r)(4)*, https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/financial-assistance-policy-and-emergency-medical-care-policy-section-501r4.

"Resources and Contacts on Diseases, Conditions, and Treatments" section also provide information on free or low-cost specialized health services.)

- *Are there any health assistance programs for pregnant women, mothers, and children? (1-800-311-BABY)*
  https://www.hhs.gov/answers/health-insurance-reform/are-there-health-assistance-programs-for-pregnant-women-mothers-children/index.html
  This U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website lists contacts for free or reduced cost prenatal care: 1-800-311-BABY (1-800-311-2229); for Spanish, call 1-800-504-7081. These numbers can connect callers to their area's health department.
- *Maternal and Child Health Bureau: State Hotlines: National*
  https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Home/StateHotlines
  This HHS Maternal and Child Health Bureau website lists state hotlines for information and assistance with health services for pregnant persons, maternal health, infants, and children.
- *Find a Family Planning Clinic*
  https://reproductivehealthservices.gov/
  From the HHS Office of Population Affairs, this directory lists clinics participating in the federal Title X Family Planning Program. Title X clinics offer family planning counseling and supplies (including contraception and natural family planning methods) and related preventive health services (including cervical cancer screenings). Clients may qualify for free or discounted care.
- *Oral and Dental Health*
  https://health.nih.gov/health-topics-a-z/oral-and-dental-health
  This National Institutes of Health resource includes "Find Affordable Dental Care." It has contact information for dental schools, dental hygiene schools, and state oral health programs, among other sources of free or low-cost oral health care.
- *FindTreatment.gov (800-662-HELP or 800-662-4357)*
  https://findtreatment.gov/
  This Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration directory can help constituents find mental health and substance use disorder treatment facilities in their communities. The directory includes facilities with sliding fee scales and payment assistance. After obtaining search results, click "Show More" at the bottom of the "Filter by" menu on the left navigation bar, then filter by "Payment assistance available." The hotline can also refer callers to local facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations. For additional tips, see *Free & Low Cost Treatment Options for Mental Health and Substance Use,* https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/how-to-pay-for-treatment/free-or-low-cost-treatment.
- *Get Free or Low-Cost Eye Care*
  https://www.nei.nih.gov/eye-health-information/healthy-vision/finding-eye-doctor/get-free-or-low-cost-eye-care
  This National Eye Institute (NEI) website lists resources and organizations that offer free or low-cost eye exams, eyeglasses, cataract surgery, glaucoma surgery, white canes, and blindness prevention services.
- *HIV, STI, and Viral Hepatitis Testing and Vaccines Near You*
  https://gettested.cdc.gov/

This Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website has a directory of free and confidential HIV, sexually transmitted infection (STI), and hepatitis testing locations, and organizations that provide home tests by mail.

- *HIV.gov: Find HIV & STI Testing Sites & Care Services*
  https://locator.hiv.gov/
  This searchable HHS map and directory includes local providers of services such as testing, mail-in self-tests, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), condoms, HIV care and treatment, behavioral health services, and housing assistance.
- *Find a Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Medical Provider*
  https://findhivcare.hrsa.gov/
  This HRSA searchable map and directory can help constituents find local Ryan White providers. Ryan White Programs provide a range of health care services, medications, and support services to eligible people living with HIV/AIDS.

Finding General Financial Support

The resources below can help constituents identify other benefits and services for which they may be eligible. Although some of these programs might not pay for health care directly, they might provide financial relief in other ways.

- *USA.gov: Government benefits*
  https://www.usa.gov/benefits
  This online tool, the product of a federal interagency collaboration, provides access to information on federal and state program benefits for individuals. Programs can be browsed by category (e.g., "Food assistance," "Help with utility bills"). USA.gov also has a phone hotline (1-844-USA-GOV1) and online chat https://www.usa.gov/chat.
- *211: Find Help Near You*
  https://www.211.org/about-us/your-local-211
  This website and phone number can help constituents identify assistance and resources in their local communities. The Federal Communications Commission has designated 211 as the three-digit phone number for information and referrals to social services, rental assistance, food banks, job training, financial assistance, and other local assistance.
- *Help for Families*
  https://acf.gov/ofa/data/map/about/help-for-families
  This website includes a directory of state "General Benefits" centralized benefit portals. Constituents can use these portals to find and apply for multiple benefit programs. The directory also lists state general information hotlines and state contacts for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. States use TANF block grants to fund cash assistance and a wide range of services and benefits for low-income families with children. This website is maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Family Assistance.
- *State social service agencies*
  https://www.usa.gov/state-social-services
  This website has a directory of state social services agency websites that provide information about state benefit programs.

Resources and Contacts on Diseases, Conditions, and Treatments

The resources and contacts below may help constituents with questions or problems related to health conditions or diseases. These resources are not a substitute for seeing a health care provider. General health hotlines, directories, and information resources are listed first, followed by resources on COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, behavioral health (including mental health and substance use disorders), and pharmaceuticals. Constituents may also be provided with state-specific information sources, such as the state health department, for additional information.

General Health Hotlines, Directories, and Information Resources

- *CDC-INFO (800-CDC-INFO or 800-232-4636)*
  https://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/
  This source, through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, provides live phone and email assistance for constituents' public health and safety questions on hundreds of topics. Staff can help callers "find the latest and reliable health information."
- *Federal Health Information Centers and Clearinghouses*
  https://odphp.health.gov/our-work/national-health-initiatives/health-literacy/resources/national-health-information-center/topic
  This directory, maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, describes federal hotlines and online resource centers where constituents can receive information and referrals on a wide range of health-related topics and services.
- *MedlinePlus*
  https://medlineplus.gov/
  This website, from the National Library of Medicine (NLM), connects constituents to plain language information on health and medical topics, including drugs and supplements, disorders and conditions, and diagnosis and therapy. Many of the topic pages have a "Find an Expert" section that directs constituents to information and services for their specific needs. Materials are available in English and Spanish.
- *MedlinePlus: Directories*
  https://medlineplus.gov/directories/
  This NLM directory list can help constituents find libraries, health professionals, services, and facilities. NLM does not endorse or recommend the organizations that produce these directories, nor the individuals or organizations included in the directories.
- *MedlinePlus: Organizations*
  https://medlineplus.gov/organizations/all_organizations.html
  This list, from NLM, includes governmental and selected nongovernmental organizations, such as patient support and advocacy groups, that provide consumer health content on a range of diseases and conditions. Many of these organizations can help constituents find services and support groups for their conditions.

- *Health: Learn about your health and how to support it*
  https://health.nih.gov/
  This National Institutes of Health website provides information for constituents on conditions and diseases, diagnosis and therapies, environmental health, "healthy living," and tips for talking with doctors. It also links to "Ask NIH," a form where constituents can submit questions and comments about health, https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/contact-us/ask-nih. NIH cannot answer personal medical questions, however.
- *Participate in Clinical Research*
  https://clinical.nih.gov/participate-clinical-research
  This National Institutes of Health website provides resources for people who are considering participation in clinical research. Website resources include "Why participate in research?," "Find and join a clinical trial," and resources for parents and children. The website links to ClinicalTrials.gov, an online database of clinical research studies.

HIV/AIDS

- *State HIV/AIDS Hotlines*
  https://ryanwhite.hrsa.gov/hiv-care/hotlines
  This Health Resources & Services Administration website lists state HIV/AIDS hotlines for finding information and services. Under "Find Help," this page lists national HIV/AIDS resources, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's HIV service locator (800-232-4636) and an HIV information hotline from the National Institutes of Health (800-448-0440).
- *HIV.gov: Find HIV & STI Testing Sites & Care Services*
  https://locator.hiv.gov/
  This searchable HHS map and directory includes local providers of services such as testing, mail-in self-tests, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), condoms, HIV care and treatment, behavioral health services, and housing assistance.

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders (Behavioral Health)

- *988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline*
  https://988lifeline.org/
  Constituents can use the Lifeline to call, text, or chat with trained counselors. Persons in distress can dial 988 for free and confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Assistance is available in multiple languages. The Lifeline is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- *FindSupport.gov* (800-662-4357)
  https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support
  This SAMHSA national helpline and website provides information and referrals to local services, support groups, and organizations for mental health, alcohol, and substance use disorders.
- *National Maternal Mental Health Hotline* (1-833-TLC-MAMA, 1-833-852-6262)
  https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/national-maternal-mental-health-hotline
  This 24/7 phone, text, and chat hotline provides free and confidential mental health support for pregnant and new mothers, as well as referrals to local and

telehealth providers and support groups. Assistance is available in multiple languages. The hotline is administered by the Health Resources & Services Administration.

- *Disaster Distress Helpline* (1-800-985-5990)
  https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline
  Constituents experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters can call or text this SAMHSA helpline. It provides 24/7 year-round multilingual crisis counseling, coping tips, and referrals for follow-up support. The helpline is open to anyone affected by disasters, including survivors, victims' loved ones, parents, caregivers, first responders, clergy, and rescue, recovery, and relief workers. Disasters may include mass violence incidents, community unrest incidents, anniversaries and trigger events, infectious disease outbreaks, and natural disasters, such as earthquakes, storms, and wildfires, among other disasters.

Pharmaceuticals

- *FDA Drug Shortages*
  https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/drugshortages/default.cfm
  This Food and Drug Administration (FDA) database provides up-to-date drug shortage information, including manufacturer contact information, current product availability, and estimated shortage duration. This database can be searched by product name or active ingredient.
- *Drug Recalls*
  https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/drug-recalls
  This FDA website provides an interactive, searchable table with drug recall information. A drug recall is a voluntary action by a drug manufacturer to remove a defective drug product from the market or warn patients and consumers about a potential risk. A recall is conducted on a company's own initiative or by FDA request. The information in this table is acquired by the FDA through public notification of a recall issued by the drug manufacturer.
- *FDA Pharmacists Help You Use Medicines Safely*
  https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/fda-pharmacists-help-you-use-medicines-safely
  This consumer site from FDA's Division of Drug Information (DDI) provides the contact information for FDA's staff of pharmacists who respond to questions about human drugs for the U.S. public. DDI staff respond to inquiries such as how to identify a tablet or pill, possible drug side effects, and how to discard unused medication.
- *National Prescription Drug Take Back Day*
  https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/takeback.html
  This U.S. Department of Justice's Drug Enforcement Administration event aims to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs, while also educating the general public about the potential for abuse of medications. This website allows users to search for a nearby collection site and information on year-round pharmaceutical disposal locations.

Resources and Contacts for Complaints

When constituents contact congressional offices with complaints about health care providers, facilities, or products, the resources and contacts below may help such constituents file their complaints with the appropriate agency. For complaints about providers, facilities, and products not listed below, congressional offices can contact CRS.

General Resources

- *Complaints & Appeals*
  https://www.hhs.gov/regulations/complaints-and-appeals/index.html
  This U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website compiles links for filing complaints about health care civil rights and discrimination, health information privacy, poor hospital care, health insurance company decisions, and health care fraud, abuse, and waste, among other types of health care complaints.
- *How to Complain and Get Heard*
  https://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/how-to-complain.html
  This Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality website has tips and contacts for constituents to communicate and complain effectively about unsafe or low-quality care. The website also links to state medical boards that can help constituents file complaints in their state.

Complaints About Drugs, Medical Devices, Dietary Supplements, and Vaccines

- *Contact FDA (1-888-INFO-FDA, or FDA's emergency line 1-866-300-4374*)
  https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/contact-fda
  This FDA website explains how constituents can report problems with FDA-regulated products, including drugs, medical devices, infant formula, and dietary supplements. It also provides a link that directs users to information on current product recalls.
- *Report a problem to the FDA*
  https://contact.fda.gov/report-problem
  This website is designed to help users navigate to the appropriate form or resources to report a problem with an FDA-regulated human or animal product.
- *MedWatch Online Voluntary Reporting Form*
  https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/medwatch/index.cfm
  This FDA form allows health professionals, consumers, and patients to voluntarily report observed or suspected adverse events for human medical products to the agency. Consumers can submit a MedWatch Voluntary Report to the FDA to report an issue with a drug, medical device, or other medical product.
- *Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) (1-800-822-7967)*
  https://vaers.hhs.gov/
  This online form allows constituents to report a reaction or adverse event following a vaccination. Reports may be submitted by patients, parents, caregivers, health care providers, and vaccine manufacturers. VAERS is cosponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the FDA.

Complaints About Health Care Facilities and Providers

In general, states are the primary regulators of health facilities and providers, so constituents may want to contact their specific state's department of health for additional options.

For complaints about facilities:

- *Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS): Contact Information for State Survey Agencies*
  https://www.cms.gov/medicare/health-safety-standards/quality-safety-oversight-general-information/contact-information
  This CMS directory lists state agency phone numbers and websites for complaints about the quality of care in state- or federally certified health care facilities, such as hospitals. Details about regulated facility types and complaint procedures vary by state.
- *File & Submit: Patient Safety Concerns or Complaints*
  https://www.jointcommission.org/en-us/contact-us/report-a-patient-safety-event
  This site from the Office of Quality and Patient Safety within The Joint Commission, a national accrediting organization of health care facilities, accepts patient safety complaints. Submissions should not include medical records, billing invoices, or other related personal information.

For complaints about doctors:

- *Contact a State Medical Board*
  https://www.fsmb.org/contact-a-state-medical-board/
  This Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) website lists "File a Complaint" links in each state in order to file complaints about physicians. FSMB also has tips on why, when, and how to report a doctor for unprofessional conduct or inadequate care, at https://www.docinfo.org/report-a-doctor/.

For complaints about nurses:

- *National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN): Contact a U.S. Member (312-525-3600)*
  https://www.ncsbn.org/contactbon
  This map links to contact information for state boards of nursing to submit complaints about nurses whose behavior is unsafe, negligent, incompetent, or unethical. Many state boards have complaint forms on their website; otherwise, constituents can call NCSBN or their state for guidance on how to submit a complaint. NCSBN also has a consumer guide to the complaint process, at https://www.ncsbn.org/public-files/A_Health_Care_Consumers_Guide.pdf.

For Medicare-related complaints:

- *Medicare.gov: Filing a complaint*
  https://www.medicare.gov/providers-services/claims-appeals-complaints/complaints
  This site allows Medicare beneficiaries who have concerns about their quality of care to submit complaints about, for example, providers, facilities, and health plans.

Complaints About Health Insurance

- *Consumer Assistance Program*
  https://www.cms.gov/cciio/resources/consumer-assistance-grants
  This website provides an interactive map of state-level contacts for assistance with health insurance problems. Some states operate Consumer Assistance Programs (CAPs), where staff can assist with health insurance problems and questions. For states with no CAP, the map links to other contacts for resolving health insurance problems, such as the state insurance department or Medicaid agency.

Reporting Health Care Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

Constituents may report suspected crimes to local law enforcement. Below are additional reporting resources.

General Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Reporting Resources

- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Office of Inspector General (HHS OIG): Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse*
  https://oig.hhs.gov/fraud/report-fraud/
  HHS OIG's purpose is to prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse in HHS programs. This hotline reviews and investigates complaints related to HHS programs and activities, which include Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, health insurance exchanges, the Indian Health Service, and HHS grants and contracts, among others. HHS OIG also investigates complaints related to abuse or neglect in nursing homes and other long-term-care facilities and failure of hospitals to evaluate and stabilize emergency patients.
- *U.S. Government Accountability Office: Report and Prevent Fraud*
  https://www.gao.gov/about/what-gao-does/fraud
  The Government Accountability Office is responsible for assisting Congress in its oversight responsibilities. Constituents who suspect fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement of federal funds may submit reports or contact FraudNet (800-424-5454), which will refer allegations to the appropriate federal, state, or local agencies or departments.
- *National Association of Attorneys General: Consumer File a Complaint*
  https://www.naag.org/our-work/center-for-consumer-protection/consumer-file-a-complaint/
  This web page has a directory of state attorneys general consumer protection hotlines, complaint forms, and websites. State attorneys general enforce state consumer protection laws and protect consumers from activities such as scams and deceptive business practices.
- *U.S. Department of Justice: Health Care Fraud Section*
  https://www.justice.gov/fraud/health-care-fraud-section
  This web page includes "Points of Contact to Report Health Care Fraud." The Health Care Fraud section prosecutes health care fraud and criminal conduct involving opioids and other controlled substances. The page also links to the Fraud Whistleblower Incentive Program (WHIP), where constituents may submit tips: https://www.justice.gov/fraud/whistleblower.

- *Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): Healthcare Fraud*
  https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/complex-financial-crime/healthcare-fraud
  The FBI investigates health care fraud for both federal and private insurance programs in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies and insurance groups. This web page has guidance for "How to report."
- *Federal Trade Commission (FTC): Report to help fight fraud!*
  https://reportfraud.ftc.gov/
  Constituents may use an online form to report health-related fraud, scams, and business practices that are not specific to a federal health care program. FTC does not resolve individual complaints. It uses reports from the public to investigate and bring cases against fraud and scams. FTC also shares reports with its law enforcement partners.

Private Health Insurance

- *National Association of Insurance Commissioners: Online Fraud Reporting System*
  https://ofrs.naic.org/
  This website has a tool for constituents to report suspected health insurance fraud to their state insurance departments.
- *HealthCare.gov: Protect yourself from Marketplace fraud & scams*
  https://www.healthcare.gov/protect-from-fraud-and-scams/
  This web page has guidance on how to "Report suspicious activity" related to health insurance exchanges.

Medicaid

- *Medicaid Fraud Control Units (MFCUs)*
  https://oig.hhs.gov/fraud/medicaid-fraud-control-units-mfcu/
  Each state's MFCU investigates and prosecutes provider fraud, as well as abuse and neglect in health facilities, nursing homes, and other health care settings. This web page links to a directory of MFCU directors, https://oig.hhs.gov/documents/medicaid-fraud-control-units/10387/MFCU%20Directors.pdf, and to the National Association of Medicaid Fraud Control Units, https://www.naag.org/about-naag/namfcu/about-the-medicaid-fraud-control-units/. (Scroll down for links to state MFCUs.)

Medicare

- *Medicare.gov: Reporting Medicare fraud & abuse*
  https://www.medicare.gov/basics/reporting-medicare-fraud-and-abuse
  This page has reporting guidance for Medicare beneficiaries and others who suspect Medicare-related fraud.
- *Senior Medicare Patrol: Report Fraud*
  https://smpresource.org/you-can-help/report-fraud/
  Federally funded Senior Medicare Patrols may assist constituents in preventing, detecting, and reporting Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse. This web page has tips for addressing and reporting suspected fraud.

Military Health System

- *Defense Health Agency: Office of Inspector General (DHA IG)*
  https://dha.mil/Offices-and-Programs/Office-of-Inspector-General
  The DHA IG investigates fraud, waste, and abuse in DHA programs. Constituents may submit complaints through this website.
- *Military Health System: Reporting Health Care Fraud or Abuse*
  https://www.health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Access-Cost-Quality-and-Safety/TRICARE-Health-Plan/Fraud-and-Abuse/Reporting-Fraud-or-Abuse
  This web page lists contacts for reporting suspected fraud or abuse in the TRICARE Program.

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (VA OIG): OIG Hotline
https://www.vaoig.gov/hotline/online-forms
The VA OIG is responsible for VA program oversight. Constituents who suspect fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement of VA programs may submit complaints or call the hotline (1-800-488-8244).

Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB)

- *Office of Personal Management (OPM): Consumer Protections: Stop Fraud*
  https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/consumer-protections/#url=Stop-Fraud
  OPM's Office of Inspector General investigates fraud, waste, and abuse in the FEHB program. This page has instructions for filing a complaint.

Indian Health Service (IHS)

- *Report Fraud, Waste, Abuse and Mismanagement*
  https://www.ihs.gov/reportfraud/
  This web page has a reporting form and hotlines for fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in IHS programs.

Appendix. Selected CRS Reports

The following CRS publications provide additional background on and analysis of some of the programs and policy issues discussed in this report.

Constituent Services

To assist older constituents or constituents with disabilities, or their caregivers, congressional offices may also consult:

- CRS In Focus IF11694, *Connecting Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities to Health Services: Resources for Congressional Offices*; and
- CRS Report R47605, *Connecting Older Adults to Information on Benefits and Services*.

To assist constituents seeking grants or funding for health facilities, congressional offices may consult:

- CRS Report R48081, *Sources of Federal Funding for Health Care Facilities: Frequently Asked Questions*;
- CRS In Focus IF13240, *Connecting Constituents with Federal Assistance for Health and Medical Businesses*; and
- CRS In Focus IF12449, *Connecting Constituents with Federal Assistance for Businesses*.

For congressional offices that want to work directly with federal agencies as facilitators or advocates for individual constituents, see:

- CRS Report 98-446, *Congressional Liaison Offices of Selected Federal Agencies*;
- CRS Report RL33209, *Casework in a Congressional Office*; and
- CRS Report R44696, *Casework in Congressional Offices: Frequently Asked Questions*.

Health Policy Issues

The following report serves as a starting point for congressional staff assigned to cover issues related to health care policy. It outlines major government stakeholders as well as relevant laws, regulations, federal programs, sources of data, and CRS products:

- CRS Report R43889, *Health Policy: Resources for Congressional Offices*

The following CRS reports focus on specific health policy issues applicable to the areas covered in this report:

- CRS In Focus IF12169, *An Overview of Medical Debt: Collection, Credit Reporting, and Related Policy Issues*
- CRS Report R46856, *Surprise Billing in Private Health Insurance: Overview of Federal Consumer Protections and Payment for Out-of-Network Services*
- CRS Report R44832, *Frequently Asked Questions About Prescription Drug Pricing and Policy*
- CRS Report R47507, *Private Health Insurance: A Primer*

- CRS Report R43357, *Medicaid: An Overview*
- CRS Report R40425, *Medicare Primer*
- CRS In Focus IF13031, *Medicare Coverage: Background and Resources*
- CRS Report R46426, *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): Overview of the Agency and Major Programs*
- CRS In Focus IF10555, *Introduction to Veterans Health Care*
- CRS Report R48406, *Connecting Veterans and Veterans Organizations to Federal Transportation Assistance*
- CRS In Focus IF10530, *Defense Primer: Military Health System*
- CRS Report R43922, *Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program: An Overview*
- CRS Report R43330, *The Indian Health Service (IHS): An Overview*
- CRS In Focus IF10051, *Title X Family Planning Program*
- CRS Report R47351, *Noncitizens' Access to Health Care*

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