

Medicare

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Supporting Innovations in a Critical Program

Medicare provides health insurance coverage to more than 50 million adults ages 65 and older and persons with permanent disabilities. Established in 1965, the program has evolved over time and now hosts many demonstration and pilot programs testing innovative approaches to improving health outcomes and reducing the cost of health care. NORC provides the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and other federal offices and agencies support for testing many of these new and important programs. NORC also conducts a large volume of Medicare-related research and analysis for other clients such as the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) and the Kaiser Family Foundation.

The NORC Approach

NORC's staff consists of experts from many disciplines, including public health, economics, epidemiology, statistics, policy, developmental psychology, sociology, social work, health information technology, and political science. The Health Care Research team has particular strength in health care and human services data collection, policy analysis, and program evaluation for government, private-sector, and foundation clients. NORC conducts multi-mode evaluations, with many projects synthesizing findings from a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. From analysis of claims data to conducting focus groups with Medicare beneficiaries and technical expert panels with thought leaders and stakeholders, NORC uses a variety of tools to assess policy changes and evaluate innovative pilot programs.



Sample Projects

Tracking Implementation of Medicare Part D. Since a prescription drug benefit was added to Medicare, NORC and partners have been conducting data analysis to track developments in plan offerings, such as changes in benefit design and the use of specialty tiers and preferred pharmacy networks. One claims-based project examined the plan design features associated with higher use of generic drugs. Another tracked how beneficiaries move from plan to plan over time, and the factors associated with higher rates of plan switching.

Financial Alignment Initiative Operations Support. High-quality, cost-effective support for dual-eligible Medicare-Medicaid participants is a priority for CMS. NORC and its partners work closely with CMS to support the implementation of state demonstration programs that are testing new approaches to providing integrated, high-quality care to the dual-eligible population using either a capitated or managed fee-for-service program model. NORC conducts readiness assessments of demonstration states and health plans, monitors states' and health plans' progress, educates stakeholders and consumers on the demonstrations, tracks and analyzes public comments, and provides project management expertise.

MedPAC Focus Groups. NORC, in partnership with Georgetown University, is conducting site visit interviews and focus groups to investigate issues related to access to care for Medicare participants, particularly dual-eligibles. NORC will issue a final report using information from discussions with Medicare participants, physicians, and representatives from federally qualified health centers and safety-net hospitals. This report will be used to inform MedPAC's Annual Reports to Congress.

Comparative Effectiveness Research Public Use Data Pilot Project. Using Medicare claims data collected over three years, NORC is building basic, enhanced, and linked public use files. To guarantee the confidentiality of Medicare enrollees' protected health information and ensure an overall low risk of disclosure, the project employs statistical disclosure limitation and rigorous re-identification analysis. The team will help disseminate and support the use of the data, and will conduct a pilot study of access to Medicare claims data via the NORC Data Enclave. Other project deliverables include the establishment of a Technical Expert Panel/Data Users Group, development of data access solutions, creation of user support documentation, and outreach and marketing activities.

Other Projects

Aligning Quality and Public Reporting Programs

Medicare Personal Health Record (PHR) Evaluation

About NORC

NORC at the University of Chicago is an independent research organization headquartered in downtown Chicago with additional offices on the University of Chicago's campus, the D.C. Metro area, Atlanta, Boston, and San Francisco. NORC also supports a nationwide field staff as well as international research operations. With clients throughout the world, NORC collaborates with government agencies, foundations, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and businesses to provide data and analysis that support informed decision-making in key areas including health care, education, economics, crime, justice, energy, security, and the environment. NORC's decades of leadership and experience in data collection, analysis, and dissemination—coupled with deep subject matter expertise—provide the foundation for effective solutions.

Learn more about NORC's work at www.norc.org.

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