



# Understanding the Federal Processes for **Expanding Contraceptive Access**

**The federal government plays a critical role in helping people access reproductive health care, including contraception.**

Sexual and reproductive health and self-determination are essential aspects of human well-being. Most people make decisions related to pregnancy in their lifetime and access services to help them achieve their reproductive goals. Contraception is essential for individuals to decide when, if, and how they choose to have children. Federally funded reproductive health care services, including contraception, are a critical part of the equation.

Federal agencies play a crucial role in mitigating barriers and expanding access to reproductive health care in communities across the country. Federal programs ultimately help people achieve their personal goals and improve the overall public health by establishing:

- 1** Evidence-based **federal clinical and programmatic guidelines** that set expected standards of care for patients.
- 2** **Performance measures** that drive quality improvement, quality assurance, and payment. Integrating performance measures into federal reporting systems can expand access to contraceptive care and help keep contraceptive care current with new innovations in delivery.
- 3** Supportive **funding strategies** aimed at reducing or removing financial barriers to contraceptive access and enabling implementation of guidelines and performance measures. This includes reimbursement for services, grant funding, workforce development initiatives, and other provider-focused strategies that enables the federal government to implement guidelines, meet performance expectations, and integrate new delivery innovations.

## Examples of how federal agencies support contraceptive care

**Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)** administers the federal Medicaid program which provides about 75% of the \$2.1 billion overall public funding for family planning services.

**Office of Population Affairs (OPA)** administers the Title X family planning program, develops guidelines for quality care in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and advises the US Secretary of Health and Human Services on a range of reproductive health topics.

**Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)** funds the community health centers that provide access to contraception and supports a range of activities designed to reduce maternal and infant mortality and promote the health of mothers and children. In addition, HRSA administers a program that provides access to discounted drugs and devices for patients of specific public health providers. The HRSA-supported Women's Preventive Service Guidelines ensure health plans cover a set of women-specific preventive services.

**Other Federal Agencies** contribute about 2% of the \$2.1 billion spent on family planning. While the CDC does not provide funding for direct contraceptive care, it does support reproductive health care delivery through surveillance and publishes recommendations that set standards for how to provide contraceptive care.

**State Governments** manage and receive state and federal funding for family planning services, administer programs, and test innovations and promising practices which can be taken up at the federal level.

## Federal challenges that impact access to contraception

- **Infrastructure is often siloed**, leading to a lack of coordination across federal agencies that have a role in funding family planning.
- **Scientific and administrative processes become stalled or are fragmented**, leading to delays in expanding contraceptive access across the country.
- **More integration of contraceptive access in health care is needed**, to help people achieve reproductive quality of life.

## Solutions to expand access to contraceptive services and support equitable reproductive health care

Finding solutions begins with the understanding that people need access to effective, safe, personalized, timely, and affordable contraception. Objective research and evidence-based best practices should be integrated with community-based expertise and lived experience — with particular attention to diverse voices — and implemented at the federal level through up-to-date guidelines, performance measures, and funding strategies.

This approach will facilitate the implementation of programs and measures to expand contraceptive care at the state, local, and health system levels. Longer term, this will lead to helping individuals attain access to personalized, high-quality family planning services.

## How we get there

- Engage key stakeholders to bring together evidence-based best practices on how to provide services and conduct research to provide direction for policy changes and priorities.
- Develop concrete recommendations to ensure these priorities are reflected in the Executive Branch's scientific and administrative processes to expand contraceptive access.
- Leverage federal processes to set the stage for widespread implementation.