

UPDATE for the Community



May 2021: Inequity is a Public Health Crisis

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd died in police custody. The video of his death and the death of Manuel Ellis, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others spurred protests across the nation dramatically increased our awareness about the devastating effects of police violence and structural and systemic racism.

(Read the full letter [HERE](#).)

ALLIANCE UPDATES

- [Working Together: Boulder Care Partners with Alliance Member Organizations to Improve Access to High-Quality, Low-Cost Addiction Treatment](#)
- [Important Primary Care Recommendations Announced Today](#)
- [Nancy Guinto Testifies on a New All-Payer Claims Database in Alaska](#)
- [The Alliance Partners on Employer Guidance to Address Cannabis in the Workplace](#)
- [Alliance Vaccination Update](#)
- [May is Stroke Awareness Month](#)
- [The Alliance Welcomes New Member HealthierHere](#)

LEARN MORE

Join Us

To find out about the benefits of joining the Alliance, email Theresa Lampkin Tamura, Director of Membership and Business Engagement, at tamura@wahealthalliance.org.

Visit the Community Checkup website

The Community Checkup website helps consumers make informed choices by giving them access to a robust and accessible supply of data and resources. [Learn more.](#)

Visit Own Your Health

The Own Your Health website offers guidance for consumers to make informed health care decision. [Learn more.](#)

We invite you to follow the Alliance

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Boulder

Addiction care, anywhere

Working Together: Boulder Care Partners with Alliance Member Organizations to Improve Access to High-Quality, Low-Cost Addiction Treatment

May is National Mental Health Month and recent reports detail [significant increases in substance use](#) and [drug-related mortality](#). To help meet this urgent need and make treatment options for substance use disorders (SUD) more accessible, Boulder Care is working with several Alliance member organizations including Regence, Premera, Lifewise, Amerigroup, Asuris NW Health, Coordinated Care, and UnitedHealthcare—to offer Boulder Care as an in-network benefit to members.

Boulder Care is a digital clinic offering long-term support and telehealth treatment for SUD, including alcohol and opioid addiction. Boulder Care provides evidence-based, patient-centric care practiced by a specialized Care Team that includes:

- Clinicians, who provide expert medical care and medication management;
- Care Advocates, who manage and coordinate care; and
- Peer Coaches, who share their own lived experience with recovery.

Participants access their dedicated Care Team through secure messaging, video visits, and 24/7 phone support. In addition to focusing on clinical outcomes, Boulder Care provides support for long-term health and wellness, as well as social determinants of health, like stable housing, employment and financial security.

Read Boulder Care's recent white paper on [Telehealth Solutions for Addiction Treatment](#) and an overview for employers, [Addressing Addictive Disease in the Workforce](#). For more information about Boulder Care visit their [website](#) or contact partners@boulder.care.

NOTE: If you are an employer with access to Boulder Care through your health plan relationships, you can also book a free [communications planning call](#) to learn more about how to improve employees' awareness of and engagement with SUD treatment—especially across historically hard-to-reach populations, and in spite of prevailing stigmas.

This is sponsored content.

The Washington Health Alliance brings together those who give, get and pay for health care to create a high-quality, affordable system for the people of Washington state.



Important Primary Care Recommendations Announced Today

High-quality primary care has long been recognized as an essential foundation to a high-performing health care system. *Primary Care: America's Health in a New Era*, was considered a landmark report when first published by the Institutes of Medicine in 1996. Twenty-five years later, primary care

continues to struggle to find its foothold with low levels of payment representing just [5-7% of total health care expenditures nationally](#), consistent [with findings in Washington](#) state. High-levels of provider dissatisfaction and burnout, [amplified by COVID-19](#), contribute to a continued [decline in the number of medical students selecting primary care](#) as their chosen field of practice exacerbating already limited and uneven access to primary care.

Today, the National Academies of Sciences, Education, and Medicine published [Implementing High-Quality Primary Care: Rebuilding the Foundation of Health Care](#), a consensus report authored by a panel of primary care experts who were assembled to study the state of primary care today and develop an implementation plan that builds upon the recommendations of the 1996 IOM report. The recommendations are focused on the many levers for change required to strengthen primary care services in the U.S. with particular focus on underserved populations.

Watch your inbox for an invitation to hear from one of the report's authors, Chris Koller, President of the Milbank Memorial Fund. In a June 1st webinar jointly sponsored by the Alliance and the Washington State Health Care Authority, Chris will discuss the benefit and payment recommendations included in the report, including the important role that attribution plays in identifying an individual's usual source of primary care. Chris will be joined by Laura Kate Zaichkin of SEIU 775 Benefits Group who will describe the important changes they are making to reinforce the importance of primary care in their benefit design and discuss how these changes can be scaled more efficiently across all purchasers with a panel of benefit advisors.



Nancy Giunto Testifies on a New All Payer Claims Database in Alaska

Many factors contribute to Alaska's high cost of health care, including its relatively small population living in remote areas, isolation from larger markets and the limited number of providers, higher hospital profit margins, and lack of government operated or teaching hospitals that are open to the public. A Milliman [study](#) found that commercial payment levels in Alaska are 76% higher than nationwide levels, physician payment levels are 148% higher, and hospital payment levels are 56% higher.

In 2017, a small group of stakeholders, the Alaska Healthcare Transformation Project, began meeting to work on a comprehensive healthcare plan for Alaska. In December 2020, the Transformation Project and Freedman Healthcare produced a [roadmap](#) for the development of an APCD. Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy proposed legislation to create an All-Payer Claims Database (APCD) under the Alaska Division of Insurance ([SB 93](#) and [HB 113](#)), calling it "an important step as we begin to rebuild Alaska's economy following the COVID-19 pandemic."

Last week, Alliance Executive Director Nancy Giunto [testified virtually](#) before the Alaska Senate Finance Committee on SB 93. Her comments highlighted the Alliance's reporting in the *Community Checkup* and *First, Do No Harm*, noting that "it takes courage to recognize publicly that health care cost and quality varies greatly

between providers and across geographies, and that our current system is unaffordable and unsustainable.” Alaska Division of Insurance Director Lori Wing-Heier said, “An APCD will allow us, for the first time, the ability to collect health care cost data from multiple payers across the state. We can’t afford to be the 50th state to have an APCD, to begin this important work.”



The Alliance Partners on Employer Guidance to Address Cannabis in the Workplace

With the recreational and medical legalization of cannabis by states, many employers are unsure of their rights and responsibilities. The Alliance convened several employer members as a focus group to address the most pressing issues related to cannabis in the workplace. The National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions (NAHPC) brought together several employer groups from across the country to identify the questions and concerns of the most importance to them. The findings were compiled and recently issued in [*Cannabis and the Workplace: Employer Strategies that Support a Healthy Workforce*](#).

The report finds that employers:

- generally do not have enough knowledge of how cannabis can affect the workplace and want to be better educated,
- support best practices for health benefits and support Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for any cannabis use drugs prescribed by healthcare practitioners,
- want better workplace education and training tools to inform employees of the risks of cannabis use and implications for drug testing, and
- want to understand the implications of employee cannabis use on safety as well as the best policy practices regarding testing, hiring, and firing.

A survey found that about half of benefit managers and human resources executives lack knowledge of cannabis terminology and many do not follow medical cannabis issues whether legislative activity, formulary coverage, reimbursement practices, or workers’ compensation. The employers said their biggest concerns about covering non-FDA approved cannabis products in their formularies were safety, liability, and questions about legality under federal law.

NAHPC provides cannabis education and guidance for employers, including a webinar, [*Cannabis: Employer Strategies that Improve Health and Safety of Your Workforce*](#), and an action brief, [*Cannabis Products on the Formulary: Adhering to Evidence- and Value-Based Standards*](#).

Alliance Vaccination Update

In this month's issue:

- **Vaccine Milestone: More Than 5 Million Doses**
- **New Mask Recommendations Based on Vaccination Status**
- **Employer Guidance to Increase Vaccination Numbers**
- **Tax Credits for Employers to Cover Time Off for Vaccinations**

[See full document here.](#)

STROKE AWARENESS May is Stroke Awareness Month

Recognizing and reacting to the signs of stroke is critical to reducing their potential long-term effects. Educational information to identify the signs of stroke is available [here](#) and customizable free resources are [available](#) to employers to support a workplace stroke awareness campaign.



The Alliance Welcomes New Member HealthierHere

HealthierHere is transforming the way health care is delivered to thousands of residents in King County. They work across medical, behavioral health, social service, and community to build a welcoming, accessible, and integrated delivery system that fosters health and wellness for all.

Learn more about [HealthierHere](#).

Joining the Alliance

To find out about the benefits of joining the Alliance, email Theresa Lampkin Tamura, Director of Membership and Business Engagement, at ttamura@wahealthalliance.org.

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