



Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Health

HHS Initiative to Strengthen Primary Health Care

Improving access to health care, advancing health equity, and improving the health of the nation are top priorities of the Biden-Harris Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Strong primary health care is important to achieving these goals.

- Primary health care has been shown to improve health outcomes and health equity and is critical for addressing the pressing health needs of our day.
- The COVID 19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of integrating public health and primary care to improve access to COVID 19 testing, care, and vaccination.
- Integration of primary health care and behavioral health improves access to mental health care, substance use disorder treatment and overdose and suicide prevention.
- Strong primary health care can lead to improved maternal and child health and wellness and help reduce the alarmingly high maternal mortality rates and disparities in our nation.
- Increasingly, primary health care and community-based organizations are partnering to support the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities by addressing social determinants of health and bringing care and resources to where people are.

Unfortunately, many people lack access to primary health care and ongoing, trusting relationships with a primary care provider and team; primary health care is under-resourced; the workforce is shrinking and like other disciplines, struggles to maintain well-being; and the COVID 19 pandemic significantly threatened the financial stability of primary care practices.

With the leadership of Secretary Becerra and Admiral Levine, the Assistant Secretary for Health, the **HHS Initiative to Strengthen Primary Health Care** was launched in September 2021. OASH is coordinating the development of an HHS action plan for strengthening primary health care, working with HHS agencies and other federal offices and departments. The recently released National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Report, [*Implementing High Quality Primary*](#)

[*Care: Rebuilding the Foundation of Health Care*](#), will inform the development of the HHS Plan. OASH is also engaging diverse stakeholders and subject matter experts, including patient, family, and community advocates, to learn about innovative approaches, needs and challenges, to inform the HHS plan. OASH aims to develop this plan by late summer 2022.

The Initiative to Strengthen Primary Health Care aims to achieve a federal foundation for high quality primary health care for all to improve the health of individuals, families, and communities, and improve health equity.