



Healthcare Policy Roundup

June 26, 2018

Catch the Highlights!

- *Cuomo announces efforts to secure rights of transgender patients*
- *City enacts legislation raising cigarette prices to \$13 a pack*
- *NYC agencies respond to health needs of migrant children detained in East Harlem facility*

Questions? Comments?

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State announces protections for transgender patients:

On Sunday, Governor Cuomo announced a series of initiatives aimed at securing the rights of transgender and gender non-conforming (TG/GNC) individuals in New York. The announcement responds to federal attempts to roll back protections for TG/GNC individuals in accessing healthcare. In recent months, the Trump Administration has specifically targeted an Obama-era regulation prohibiting healthcare providers and insurers from discriminating against TG/GNC patients.

In anticipation of federal action, the Governor has directed the New York State Department of Health to issue regulations prohibiting healthcare providers from discriminating against TG/GNC patients. Cuomo also directed the New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS) to expand the scope of anti-discrimination protections for individuals accessing health insurance. DFS will issue a reminder to health insurers that gender-based discrimination is prohibited in New York for certain policies.

On Monday, the New York State Division of Human Rights released a public fact sheet containing similar messaging about discrimination in the healthcare setting. According to Human Rights Commissioner Helen Diane Foster: "Hospitals and medical workers who deny [transgender individuals] access [to services] or otherwise harass or discriminate against them will be prosecuted under the Human Rights Law."

New York City officially raises price of cigarette packs to \$13:

New York City now boasts the highest base cigarette price in the nation. Earlier this month, the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) raised the minimum pack price from \$10.50 to \$13.00. The move coincides with a new ad campaign emphasizing the cost of smoking habits by showing images of grocery receipts and vacation brochures burning in ashtrays.



According to DOHMH, smoking rates in NYC have declined from 21.5% in 2002 to 13.1% in 2016. The de Blasio Administration aims to reduce the number of smokers to 160,000 individuals by 2020. The city sees price control as integral part of this effort. "The cost of cigarettes is rising in New York City, and history shows that higher prices means fewer smokers," stated city Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett.

In addition to raising tobacco prices, the city is tackling smoker rates by offering free nicotine patches and lozenges to smokers. According to Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, a supporter of tobacco control measures: "We must do all we can to reduce consumption of known carcinogens in our city, especially for our youth."

City responds to health needs of detained immigrants:

Amid national outrage over the separation of migrant families at the U.S.-Mexico border, New York City agencies are turning their focus to the health needs of over 200 children detained in an East Harlem facility. According to NYC Health & Hospitals CEO Dr. Mitchell Katz, the city has already seen twelve migrant children go through the public hospital system.

While most children presented with physical conditions such as asthma or constipation, many exhibited symptoms of emotional trauma. "Although we've been able to treat their medical diagnoses, [these children] are sad and despondent and we are unable to treat the emotional scars they're presenting with," stated Dr. Daran Kaufman, Director of Pediatric Emergency Services at North Central Bronx Hospital.

In response, the city has ramped up outreach to foster care agencies to facilitate access to immunizations and mental health services. At the same time, Council Health Committee Chair Mark Levine is spearheading efforts to collect supplies for children who remain in the East Harlem facility. Among the items contributed, Levine's office has collected diapers, blankets, teething rings, and warm clothing.