

Special Needs Alliance:

Public Policy News You Can Use



April 14, 2026

CDC ACIP Releases Updated Charter

On April 9th, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [released](#) an [updated charter](#) for the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Typically, the CDC updates the ACIP's charter without much fanfare every other year. The new charter broadens qualifications for ACIP panel members, allowing Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s selections to serve, many of whom have been critical of vaccines. Further, the updated charter echoes wording used by vaccine critics such as studying "gaps in vaccine safety research" and considering the cumulative effects of vaccinations, which go against scientific consensus. HHS spokesperson Andrew Nixon stated that the updated charter follows routine statutory requirements and does "not signal any broader policy shift". The updated charter follows Secretary Kennedy's actions to shift ACIP's policies towards vaccine skepticism, going against promises he made in his confirmation hearings.

FDA Withdraws Approval for Medication Trump Administration Claims Treats Autism

Last week, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [withdrew approval](#) of Wellcovorin, a branded version of leucovorin, one month after its approval at the manufacturer's request. Decades ago, Wellcovorin was approved to manage the side effects of chemotherapy treatment for some cancer patients. In 2025, the FDA [approached](#) GSK to explore approving Wellcovorin for cerebral folate transport deficiency in neurodevelopmental disorders, particularly autism spectrum disorder. Subsequently, GlaskoSmithKline (GSK) announced it would seek approval for Wellcovorin to treat cerebral folate transport deficiency. GSK [suspended](#) manufacturing Wellcovorin in 1997, but filed the approval to allow generic leucovorin to be used in the treatment of cerebral folate deficiency. Immediately following GSK's announcement, Trump Administration officials endorsed the medication to treat children with autism.

In GSK's withdrawal request, the manufacturer [recognized](#) that the research supporting the treatment of autism spectrum disorder with Wellcovorin or generic leucovorin was based in small studies, [one](#) of which has been retracted. Although Wellcovorin's application was withdrawn, generic leucovorin will still be available to treat cerebral folate deficiency.

CDC Delays Publishing COVID Vaccine Report

On Thursday, April 9th, The Washington Post [reported](#) that Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Acting Director Jay Bhattacharya delayed the publication of a CDC report showing that the COVID-19 vaccination reduced the likelihood of emergency department visits and hospitalizations for healthy adults last winter. The report was originally scheduled for publication in the March 19 edition of the [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) (MMWR) and followed the same methodology as a [COVID-19 effectiveness study](#) that was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2021. The report had undergone the CDC's scientific review process but was delayed by Acting Director Bhattacharya over concerns about the scientific methodology. A week before the COVID-19 report was planned to be released, the CDC published a [report](#) in MMWR about influenza vaccine effectiveness over the same research period using the same methodology.

Current and former federal officials expressed concern that information about the COVID-19 vaccine's benefits are being downplayed because they directly conflict with Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s criticism of the vaccine.

CMS Look-Alike Plan Policy Shows Limited Progress on Care Integration

A [recent analysis](#) published in *Health Affairs Forefront* examines the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) policy to terminate "look-alike" Medicare Advantage (MA) plans, plans with high enrollment of individuals eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid without full integration of benefits. The policy, first implemented in 2023 and later tightened, was intended to encourage dual-eligible beneficiaries' enrollment in fully integrated care models; however, the article found that the revised policy had limited success in achieving that goal with most affected beneficiaries transitioning to plans that still lack meaningful coordination between Medicare and Medicaid services.

The authors argue that while the policy reduced the prevalence of look-alike plans, it did not sufficiently address underlying structural incentives that shape plan offerings and beneficiary enrollment. In practice, insurers appear to have shifted enrollees into other non-integrated or minimally integrated plan types, suggesting that additional policy changes may be needed to meaningfully expand access to coordinated care. The article highlights potential alternatives, such as stronger enrollment mechanisms and broader application of integration requirements, as policymakers continue to explore ways to improve care delivery and outcomes for the dually eligible population.

What's on Tap

Upon lawmakers' return from recess last week, they will be faced with the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) shutdown](#) again. Before recess, Senate Republicans attempted to address the shutdown by passing a measure to fund most of DHS, but the proposal failed to pass the House of Representatives. DHS issued a memo early this morning indicating that any compensation owed to the agency's employees would be paid after DHS funding is restored, but it remains unclear whether that memo applies to TSA employees. Despite President Trump providing back pay to Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers through an executive order a few weeks ago, officers could still miss future paychecks. Airports across the nation have felt the impact of the partial government shutdown over the past two months because large portions of TSA employees are calling out for work due to lack of pay.

Talk of a second or third [reconciliation package](#) continues amongst prominent Republican leadership. The White House and Republican Congressional leadership have publicly backed a second reconciliation package to fund Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol beginning no later than June 1st. While the reconciliation process bypasses the need for Democratic support for the funding measure, the GOP conference will face some barriers in the House where Speaker Johnson (R-LA) wields a razor thin majority. Senate Republicans are confident they will have a budget resolution ready as soon as next week for action in the upper chamber. In parallel to reconciliation proceedings, Speaker Johnson will also have to grapple with the [reauthorization](#) of the divisive Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which expires on April 20th.

While much of the focus in Washington is on domestic funding issues and the war in Iran, the Trump Administration has continued its efforts to address allegations of fraud and abuse in the nation's healthcare programs. Acting Attorney General (AG) Todd Blanche [announced](#) last week that the Department of Justice's National Fraud Enforcement Division (NFED) will be establishing a National Fraud Detection Center, seeking to identify fraud across taxpayer funded programs. Blanche directed NFED to take control of the existing Criminal Division's Tax Section; Health Care Fraud Unit; and Market, Government, and Consumer Fraud Unit and to "establish the priorities and direct the allocation of resources within them." Acting AG Blanche also began reorganizing existing resources and bringing litigators into NFED to expand its prosecuting powers. The shift of resources marks a significant move for the Department of Justice (DOJ), which has historically moved slowly on most fraud prosecutions.

Upcoming Events

Senate

- In Session: April 13-17
- Thursday, April 16, 10:00am | Senate HELP Committee holds a hearing on [Making Medicines More Affordable: How Competition can Lower Drug Prices](#) | 430 Dirksen Senate Office Building

House

- In Session: April 13-17
- Wednesday April 15, 10:15am| House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee hearing on [Proposals to Improve Public Health](#) | 2123 Rayburn House Office Building
- Thursday, April 16, 9:00am| House Ways and Means Committee holds [Hearing with HHS Secretary Kennedy](#) | 1100 Longworth House Office Building