

Leaked MAHA Draft Calls For Tying Medicaid Quality Metrics To Nutrition, Fitness Goals

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The draft MAHA document was first obtained by the *New York Times* and then by *Politico*. -- *Jalen Brown* (jbrown@iwpnews.com) | Inside Washington Publishers

The Trump administration plans to tie Medicaid quality measures to nutrition and physical fitness goals as part of its sweeping “Make America Healthy Again” (MAHA) strategy, according to a leaked draft of the strategy -- which could signal how the administration may also later adjust Medicare quality programs.

The draft strategy, prepared by the MAHA Commission and sent to the president this week, calls on CMS to work with states to establish quality metrics for Medicaid managed care organizations that “promote measurable health improvements through nutrition coaching and other fitness indicators.” The document also recommends that CMS support state CHIP programs in advancing evidence-based prevention and wellness efforts for children at the local level, while also calling on CMS and HHS to overhaul quality measurement in both Medicaid and CHIP to prioritize children’s health outcomes rather than relying solely on utilization.

The recommendations mark the first explicit move under the MAHA agenda to embed wellness-oriented benchmarks, such as exercise capacity and diet-related metrics, into federal quality reporting frameworks.

But while the Trump administration under HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has stated an interest in tackling chronic conditions nationwide through nutrition and fitness related interventions, opponents critical of the administration have long said this falls short of addressing structural drivers of poor health -- such as poverty, housing instability, environmental hazards and inequitable access to care.

CMS hinted at plans to develop new Medicare quality measures around nutrition and well-being in the administration’s fiscal 2026 Inpatient Prospective Payment System final rule, leading industry lawyers at McDermott+ to anticipate the MAHA agenda could eventually spill over into Medicare’s hospital quality reporting programs. The Medicaid-focused recommendations in the MAHA draft strategy could foreshadow where CMS is heading on the Medicare side.

“CMS hinted that it plans to develop new measures around nutrition and well-being going forward, which may be forecast in more detail in the next version of the Make America Healthy Again report,” the McDermott lawyers said in the Aug. 7 blog post. “In the proposed reg, CMS sought input on the applicability of tools and constructs that assess integrative health, self-care, and nutrition and preventive care measures -- a clear strategic priority of this administration.”