

Health Officials Target US Hospitals Over Kids' Transgender Care

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Hospitals that offer gender-affirming care to minors will be forced to forgo federal insurance funding under a rule proposed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, part of an effort by the Trump administration to curtail the practice.

The agency said Thursday it will roll out a two-part plan to curb access. Medicaid reimbursements for treatment through the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, will no longer be offered for those under the age of 19. Hospitals that receive funding through Medicaid and Medicare, the government's programs for the poor and elderly, also must stop offering the care.

The proposed rules were posted on a federal website and now face a public comment period.

CMS's move is the latest turn in the Trump administration's myriad efforts to curb support and care for transgender people in the US. The strategy — largely led by the Department of Justice and the White House — has been immediately met by lawsuits.

In January, Trump signed an executive order to halt funds for hospitals and medical schools that provide transgender care to people under the age of 19. Washington, Oregon and Minnesota sued in February over the order. A judge then issued an injunction, effectively blocking it from being implemented.

The order also directed HHS to release a report on gender dysphoria and gender-affirming care in kids. That report was released in May and met with intense criticism over its contradictory data. The administration has canceled hundreds of thousands of dollars in LGBTQ+ research and a federal suicide prevention hotline for transgender youth.

Cutting off funding for gender-affirming care was a top campaign pledge from Trump. It is already banned or restricted in 27 states, according to research from KFF, a nonpartisan health research institute. The new CMS proposal would impact hospitals in the remaining states, including California and New York, and the District of Columbia.

The strong-arming from the Trump administration and subsequent warning letters led to multiple children's hospitals ending access to gender-affirming care over the summer, including Children's Hospital Los Angeles, one of the largest providers of care in the US. Doctors were also subpoenaed by the Justice Department for patients' private information. By August, 16 states sued the administration to fight the restrictions.

The Supreme Court weighed in on the debate in June, ruling that states can control who receives care. The Trump administration has also banned transgender people in the military.

About 3% of American youth identify as transgender or nonbinary, but not all of them seek out medical care.