

Health Information Compliance Alert

Enforcement News: Data Targets Health Inequities During COVID-19

Plus: Review updated hurricane-specific resources.

If you're getting financial assistance from the feds, you may want to revisit the rules and requirements under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, cautions a recent **HHS Office for Civil Rights** (OCR) brief.

On July 20, OCR issued new guidance reminding "recipients of federal financial assistance" that they must comply with "federal civil rights laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in HHS-funded programs during COVID-19," an agency release warns.

Recent data suggest there's been an increase in discriminatory practices across the healthcare spectrum during the pandemic. This has prompted the agency to work in tandem with the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC), the **HHS Office of Minority Health**, and the **National Institutes of Health** (NIH) to identify, research, and stop racial and ethnic inequities.

Additionally, OCR offers specific guidelines to aid the healthcare community with Title VI compliance - and ensure equal access to care, treatment, and testing. A few of the OCR highlights include:

- Set up stronger policies to circumvent harassment and discrimination.
- Put more COVID-19 testing sites in urban areas where the need is greater.
- Allot beds, services, and medicine "without regard to race, color, or national origin."
- Ensure all neighborhoods receive equal access to ambulances, home health, and healthcare services.

"HHS is committed to helping populations hardest hit by COVID-19, including African-American, Native American, and Hispanic communities," stresses **Roger Severino**, OCR Director. "This guidance reminds providers that unlawful racial discrimination in healthcare will not be tolerated, especially during a pandemic," he adds.

Find the bulletin at www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/title-vi-bulletin.pdf.



In other news ...

Weather experts predict that the 2020 hurricane season will be a humdinger - and the feds have updated advice to address these natural disasters.

The **HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness & Response the Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange** (ASPR-TRACIE), updated its online hurricane resources

on August 3. The guidance offers a dense sampling of both personal and professional tips, links, and tools across various specialties and facility types.



Plus: A part of the offering deals with secondary disasters like hurricanes during the coronavirus outbreak. The advice falls under the agency's COVID-19 resources and is titled "Healthcare System Preparedness for Secondary Disasters during COVID-19." Some handy subtopics with federal guidance and tools include the following highlights:

- Providing healthcare without power and telehealth options

- Sheltering during COVID-19
- Assisting and transporting injured patients
- Ensuring infection control
- Cleaning and disinfecting after the natural disaster

Resources: Find ASPR-TRACIE's hurricane resources at <https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/aspr-tracie-hurricane-resources-at-your-fingertips.pdf> and review guidance on secondary disaster during COVID-19 at <https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/aspr-tracie-ta-covid-19-and-secondary-disasters--5-14-2020.pdf>.