

# NVHR 2017 Accomplishments: Public Policy

## Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access

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NVHR and the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation of Harvard Law School (CHLPI) launched *Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access* on October 23, 2017 at The Liver Meeting in Washington, DC. This report offers the first-ever comprehensive analysis of hepatitis C treatment access restrictions in all state Medicaid programs, including both traditional fee-for-service and managed care. We also scored and ranked each state based on their restrictions and created individual report cards for each state Medicaid program, including Washington, DC and Puerto Rico, with tailored recommendations for improving access to hepatitis C treatment in each state. These materials are housed on an interactive standalone website, [www.stateofhepc.org](http://www.stateofhepc.org).

NVHR and CHLPI also cosponsored the Washington Post's first Health 202 Live event, which convened elected officials, members of the business community and experts who are shaping the policy, regulation and practice of health care for a live news program examining the issues, questions and stories dominating the health-care debate in Washington. NVHR/CHLPI highlighted key findings from our report at a special panel discussion during the event.

## Eliminating Hepatitis B & C in the United States

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NVHR was the only community sponsor of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's report, *A National Strategy for the Elimination of Hepatitis B and C*, released in March 2017. In addition to hosting a national webinar with the National Academies highlighting its recommendations, we provided the community's perspective on implementing the *Strategy* at the CDC Foundation's *Summit for the Elimination of Hepatitis B and C as a Public Health Threat* in April 2017. We also presented on the *Strategy* in a webinar for members of the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations.

NVHR developed a sign-on letter with 80 organizations calling on President Trump to establish a high-level, coordinated effort to manage viral hepatitis elimination. In partnership with Hep B United and NASTAD, we held a congressional briefing on the *Strategy* on June 14, 2017 before a full room of 100 attendees. In conjunction with the briefing, NVHR published an op-ed in The Hill calling on national leaders to advance strategies towards eliminating viral hepatitis in the United States.

## Protecting the Affordable Care Act & Medicaid

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NVHR led the viral hepatitis community in successful efforts to protect affordable, quality health care. We partnered with other national organizations representing chronic illnesses to develop and execute a united strategy to defeat any ACA repeal legislation that wasn't immediately replaced with a system that guarantees sufficient health care coverage. We developed a fact sheet, *How the ACA Helps People with*

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*Hepatitis B and C*, for advocates to use as a resource when communicating with their elected officials about the importance of the public health safety net.

On National African American Hepatitis C Action Day, NVHR partnered with the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS on a national call-in, urging advocates to contact their legislators in opposition to ACA repeal. NVHR also developed a fact sheet, *Hepatitis C in the African American Community*, to highlight key messages presented to lawmakers during the call-in day.

## **Leading Policy Strategies to Address Viral Hepatitis in the Criminal Justice System**

In 2017, NVHR established viral hepatitis in the criminal justice system as a public policy priority given the tremendous need and the recommendation made by the National Academies to expand access to immunization, screening and treatment in prisons. NVHR developed a policy workgroup, the *Hepatitis Criminal Justice Working Group*, convening community advocates to identify and implement policy solutions to the challenges facing people with hepatitis in the criminal justice system. We also collaborated with industry partners to discuss options for expanding access to hepatitis C treatment in prisons.

NVHR delivered presentations on hepatitis, incarceration, and the criminal legal systems at four conferences, including the ADAP Advocacy Association conference, the NASTAD Hepatitis Technical Assistance meeting, SYNC 2017, and the U.S. Conference on AIDS and in a webinar in partnership with Treatment Action Group and Hepatitis Education Project. We also developed a fact sheet, *Eliminating Hepatitis C: A Pathway Through Corrections*, for advocates to use in administrative and congressional visits.

## **Addressing the Link Between Viral Hepatitis & the Opioid Crisis**

In 2017, NVHR also prioritized addressing the public health impact of viral hepatitis on the opioid crisis. We developed a fact sheet, *Dual Epidemics: Opioids and Hepatitis C*, for community members to use in federal and state level advocacy. This fact sheet incorporates the National Academies' recommendation that state and federal agencies expand access to syringe service programs to combat both the opioid and hepatitis C crises. NVHR drafted and submitted a letter to the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis to urge inclusion of the National Academies' recommendations on syringe access in the Commission's Final Report to the President.