



**GA FLEX Quality Improvement Project Monthly Meeting**  
April 28, 2026



# Agenda

- Welcome
- Substance Use Treatment Toolkit
- Mental Health Awareness Month Toolkit
- Q&A/Wrap Up



# GA FLEX Improvement Project Lead



**Melody "Mel" Brown, MSM**

Quality Program Manager


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Melody has over 45 years of health care experience, including varied roles at Alliant Health Solutions. She currently works on projects with hospitals, nursing homes, and physician practices concentrating on quality improvement strategies and implementation of interventions.

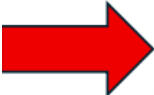
# Important Dates to Remember

## GA FLEX QUALITY IMPROVEMENT – FEBRUARY 24, 2026 INFORMATION

### Reporting Deadlines:

These measures are collected throughout the 2025 calendar year (CY) and submitted once in early 2026. 

Measure Description 	Reporting Period	Submission Deadline
 Safe Use of Opioids (eCQM)	CY 2025	March 2, 2026 
Antibiotic Stewardship Survey	CY 2025	March 1, 2026
SDOH Screening (Social Drivers)	CY 2025	May 15, 2026
OP-22 (Left Without Being Seen)	CY 2025	May 15, 2026
HCP Influenza Vaccination	Oct 1, 2025 – Mar 31, 2026	May 15, 2026
Hybrid Hospital-Wide Readmission	July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026	Oct 1, 2026

-  **Safe Use of Opioids:** This must be submitted as an eCQM file upload via [QualityNet/HQR](#).



April 2026

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# Trends in Inpatient Revenue and Volume Among Critical Access Hospitals

Tyler Malone, Angelina Budko

<https://www.flexmonitoring.org/publication/trends-inpatient-revenue-and-volume-among-critical-access-hospitals>

# Chartbook of Frontier CAH's

Frontier Hospitals located in the Mid and Western US



[About](#) [Critical Access Hospitals](#) [Our Work](#) [State Profiles](#) [News](#) [Contact](#)

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April 2026

## A Chartbook on the Characteristics and Needs of Frontier Critical Access Hospitals

[John Gale](#), [Rebecca Stearns](#), [Zach Croll](#), Jayne Foley

<https://www.flexmonitoring.org/publication/chartbook-characteristics-and-needs-frontier-critical-access-hospitals>

# National CAH Report



**Flex Monitoring Team**

University of Minnesota | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill | University of Southern Maine

## 2025 National CAH Quality Inventory & Assessment National Report

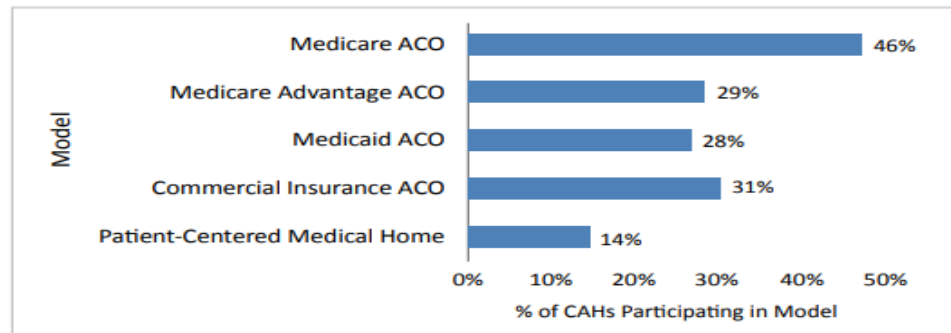
MADELEINE PICK, MPH; ROBERT BARCLAY, MPH

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[https://www.flexmonitoring.org/sites/flexmonitoring.umn.edu/files/media/2025\\_Assessment\\_National\\_Report.pdf](https://www.flexmonitoring.org/sites/flexmonitoring.umn.edu/files/media/2025_Assessment_National_Report.pdf)

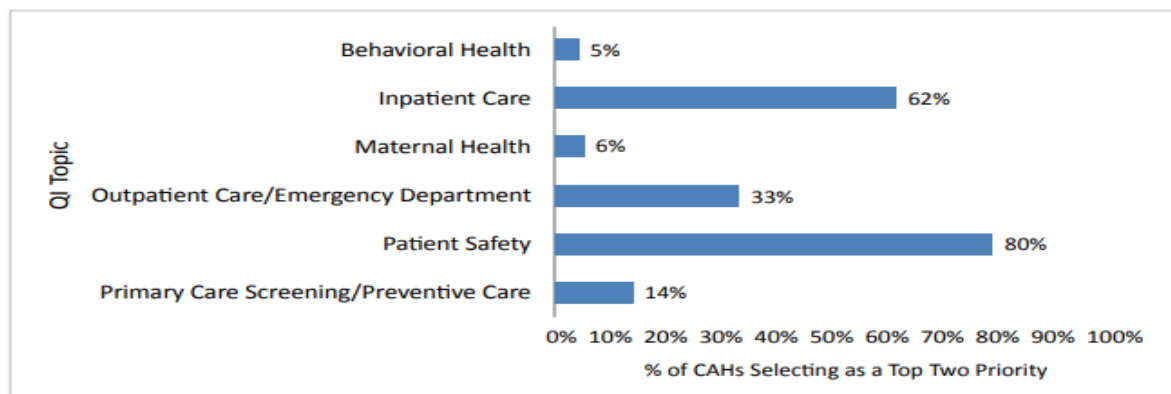
# Report Statistics

**FIGURE 5: Quality Payment Model Participation in CAHs (n=1,271)**



Note: CAHs were instructed to select all that applied

**FIGURE 6: Quality Improvement Topic Priorities in CAHs (n=1,271)**



Note: CAHs were restricted to selecting two QI topics as their top priorities

# 2026 SUD Treatment Month Toolkit

## 2026 Substance Use Disorder Treatment Month

Substance Use Disorder Treatment Month (Treatment Month), which is observed in January, serves to support:

- People contemplating or seeking help for their substance use
- Practitioners treating or considering treating substance use disorder
- Friends, family, and loved ones of those with substance use conditions

By raising awareness of treatment, including medications to treat substance use disorders, SAMHSA seeks to:

- Eliminate stigma surrounding treatment, including medications used to treat substance use disorders
- Encourage those on their treatment and recovery journey
- Promote best practices such as screening, intervention, and treatment of substance use disorders by health care providers

<https://www.samhsa.gov/about/digital-toolkits/substance-use-disorder-treatment-month>

# SUD Toolkit

## What the Toolkit Provides

- Ready-to-use social media graphics & messaging (english & spanish)
- Weekly themes, talking points, and webinar materials
- Links to treatment locators and federal resources

## Organizational Value

- Supports patient safety, harm reduction, and access to care
- Aligns with SAMHSA, CMS, and public-health priorities
- Low-burden, turnkey resources for hospitals and cahs

# May-Mental Health Awareness Month



## 2026 Mental Health Awareness Month Toolkit

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Check out what SAMHSA is doing, share our materials, and remember that we all play vital roles in caring for our mental health!

[https://www.samhsa.gov/about/digital-toolkits/mental-health-awareness-month/toolkit?utm\\_source=SAMHSA&utm\\_campaign=c4091c9ad2-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2026\\_03\\_16\\_03\\_50\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_-429f75b745-445354966](https://www.samhsa.gov/about/digital-toolkits/mental-health-awareness-month/toolkit?utm_source=SAMHSA&utm_campaign=c4091c9ad2-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2026_03_16_03_50_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-429f75b745-445354966)

# Toolkit Contents

## The Toolkit is a One-Stop Shop

The toolkit offers comprehensive resources in a central location that you can download and share. Some content can be customized for the needs of your audiences. The toolkit includes:

- Key messages and themes for each week in May.
- Social media content, graphics, and promotional materials designed for your audiences and media channels.
- Messaging that encourages acceptance and support of people living with a mental illness.
- Best practices for supportive and beneficial discussions about mental health.
- Additional resources for increasing awareness about mental health in May and beyond.

# How to Use the Toolkit

## How to Use the Toolkit

The toolkit can help you spread awareness about the importance of mental health and its effects on physical and emotional well-being.

- Copy, download, and share our social messages, graphics, and promotional materials in ways that fit the needs of your audiences and channels.
- Use our hashtags when sharing content related to Mental Health Awareness Month.
- Use our tools and the actions recommended in Best Practices to engage with your communities and networks.

# Overall Theme

## Key Messages and Weekly Themes

### **Overall Theme: See the Person. Support the Journey.**

Mental health is part of everyday life. It shapes how we think, feel, connect with others, and move through the world. This year's theme highlights the importance of:

- Noticing early signs of mental health concerns
- Strengthening the support around us
- Responding with care and compassion during challenging moments

Mental health touches every part of life — from housing and work to relationships and community. When mental health challenges arise, they often intersect with substance use, and whole person care that addresses both is essential to lasting recovery and well-being.

These key messages and weekly themes are your starting point. Sample social media shareables are also included. Please feel free to use them as-is or adapt for your audience.

## What the CMS Safe Use of Opioids Measure Addresses

- The CMS Safe Use of Opioids – Concurrent Prescribing (CMS506) measure evaluates the proportion of hospitalized adult patients discharged with either:
  - Two or more opioids, or
  - An opioid and a benzodiazepine prescribed concurrently
- This measure exists because concurrent opioid and benzodiazepine use greatly increases overdose risk, respiratory depression, and death, and is strongly linked to preventable harm. [\[ecqi.healthit.gov\]](https://www.ecqi.healthit.gov)
- Importantly, benzodiazepines are frequently prescribed for mental health conditions such as anxiety, panic disorder, PTSD, and insomnia. As a result, the CMS measure sits at the intersection of pain management and mental health treatment. [\[ecqi.healthit.gov\]](https://www.ecqi.healthit.gov), [\[cms.gov\]](https://www.cms.gov)

# Mental Health Awareness Month: Purpose and Scope

**Mental Health Awareness Month (May), led by SAMHSA, aims to:**

- Increase awareness of mental health conditions
- Reduce stigma
- Promote screening, early intervention, and access to care
- Emphasize recovery and whole-person health
- SAMHSA explicitly recognizes that mental health and substance use disorders are deeply interconnected, and promotes integrated approaches to prevention and treatment. [\[samhsa.gov\]](https://www.samhsa.gov)

# Shared Risk Factors Create a Strong Correlation

## Mental Health Conditions Increase Opioid-Related Risk

- Research consistently shows that people with depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, PTSD, and other mental illnesses are:
  - More likely to receive opioid prescriptions
  - More likely to experience opioid misuse
  - At significantly higher risk for fatal and non-fatal opioid overdose
- A large systematic review found that 37 of 38 studies demonstrated a link between mental illness and opioid overdose risk. [\[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov\]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/)
- This explains why CMS Safe Use of Opioids performance is indirectly influenced by mental health prevalence and treatment patterns.

# Benzodiazepines: The Critical Mental Health Link

Benzodiazepines (e.g., lorazepam, alprazolam, diazepam) are:

- Commonly prescribed for mental health conditions
- Involved in **31–51% of fatal opioid overdoses**
- Associated with a **10-fold increase in overdose risk when combined with opioids**
- CMS506 directly targets this risk by discouraging **opioid-benzodiazepine co-prescribing**, a practice often driven by untreated or undertreated mental health conditions.

## Why Mental Health Awareness Month Supports CMS506 Goals

Mental Health Awareness Month reinforces several **upstream strategies** that directly improve performance on the Safe Use of Opioids measure:

### 1. Early Identification and Treatment

Screening for depression, anxiety, and trauma reduces reliance on benzodiazepines

Non-pharmacologic mental health treatments lower polypharmacy risk [\[samhsa.gov\]](https://www.samhsa.gov)

### 2. Integrated Care Models

Behavioral health integration reduces fragmented prescribing

Collaborative care decreases unsafe medication combinations [\[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov\]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/)

### 3. Stigma Reduction

Patients are more likely to disclose mental health symptoms

Providers can treat root causes instead of layering medications [\[nami.org\]](https://www.nami.org/)

# Public Health and Quality Alignment

Although Mental Health Awareness Month is not a CMS regulatory program, it:

- Supports national opioid overdose prevention goals
- Aligns with CDC and SAMHSA guidance on minimizing high-risk prescribing
- Reinforces CMS's emphasis on patient safety and harm reduction
- CDC and SAMHSA both stress that addressing co-occurring mental health conditions is essential to reducing opioid misuse and overdose deaths.  
[\[cdc.gov\]](#), [\[samhsa.gov\]](#)

# Practical Takeaways

CMS Safe Use of Opioids Measure	Mental Health Awareness Month
Focuses on reducing dangerous prescribing	Focuses on treating conditions that drive dangerous prescribing
Targets opioid-benzodiazepine risk	Highlights mental health conditions commonly treated with benzodiazepines
Measures downstream safety outcomes	Promotes upstream prevention
Patient safety metric	Public-health engagement strategy

## Bottom Line

**The CMS Safe Use of Opioids measure and Mental Health Awareness Month are linked through shared risk factors, shared populations, and shared prevention goals.**

Improving mental health screening, access, and treatment—especially during Mental Health Awareness Month—directly supports safer opioid prescribing, reduces polypharmacy, and improves CMS506 performance.

# Find Treatment

<https://findtreatment.gov/>

 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

[En Español](#)

## FindTreatment.gov

**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

Search SAMHSA.gov

Search

Home

Search For Treatment

State Agencies

Facility Registration

FAQs

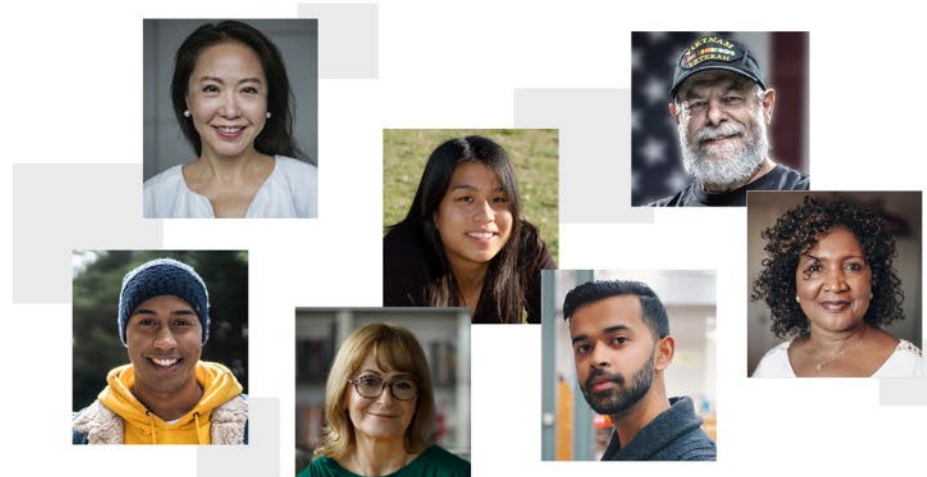
Help

About

Contact Us

## Millions of Americans have mental and substance use disorders. Find treatment here.

Welcome to FindTreatment.gov, the confidential and anonymous resource for persons seeking treatment for mental and substance use disorders in the United States and its territories.



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# Find Treatment

## Find a Treatment Facility

Enter your address, city, zip code, or facility name

Search

## Help Resources

### 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Free and confidential support for people in distress, 24/7.

Call or text 988

### National Helpline

Treatment referral and information, 24/7.

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

### Disaster Distress Helpline

Immediate crisis counseling related to disasters, 24/7.

1-800-985-5990

# Project Timeline

Date	To-Do List
4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month 10AM EST	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly calls
May 26, 2026	<input type="checkbox"/>



Email [melody.brown@allianthealth.org](mailto:melody.brown@allianthealth.org) to schedule a meeting.

# Alliant Health Website and GA Flex Resources

<https://quality.allianthealth.org/ga-flex/>



## GA Flex Resources

### Hospital Resources

[Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project \(MBQIP\) 2025 Measure Core Set Information Guide – Version 2.2 – 3.1.2025](#) ➔

[The Rural Quality Improvement Technical Assistance \(RQITA\) Resource Center](#) ➔

### Safe Use of Opioids

[Safe Use of Opioids – Concurrent Prescribing](#) ➔

### Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

[Screening for SDOH Measure and the Screen Positive Rate Measure](#) ➔

[FAQs Social Determinants of Health \(SDOH\) Measures](#) ➔

[Discharge Referral List](#) ➔

[Improving the Collection of Social Determinants of Health \(SDOH\) Data with ICD-10-CM Z Codes](#) ➔

[Show More](#)

## Resources

1. The Rural Quality Improvement Technical Assistance (RQITA) Resource Center: <https://www.telligen.com/rqita/>
2. Rural Health Information Hub website: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/>
3. Rural Health Research Gateway: <https://www.ruralcenter.org/>

# Questions?

 **ALLIANT**  
HEALTH SOLUTIONS

 **SORH**  
*State Office of Rural Health*  
A Division of the Georgia Department of Community Health