



# 2021 Title X Final Rule SUMMARY

October 2021

Enacted in 1970 as part of the Public Health Service Act and administered by the Office of Population Affairs (OPA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Title X family planning program is a critical part of America's public health safety net, serving as a point-of-entry into care for millions and the gold standard for providing high-quality, affordable, and confidential voluntary family planning and related preventive health services, with priority given to low-income clients. Title X-funded service sites provide contraceptive education and counseling; breast and cervical cancer screening; testing for sexually transmitted infections and HIV, referral, and prevention education; and pregnancy diagnosis and counseling.

In October 2021, HHS published the Title X Final Rule "[Ensuring Access to Equitable, Affordable, Client-Centered, Quality Family Planning Services](#)." The 2021 final rule revokes the 2019 final rule, "[Compliance With Statutory Program Integrity Requirements](#)", in its entirety and readopts the 2000 final rule, "[Standards of Compliance for Abortion-Related Services in Family Planning Services Projects](#)" with revisions to ensure access to equitable, affordable, client-centered, quality family planning services for all clients, especially for low-income clients. The following provides a summary of essential provisions within the 2021 rule.

## Quality

In April 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and OPA developed *Providing Quality Family Planning Services: Recommendations from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the US Office of Population Affairs* (QFP) to define what constitutes quality in family planning service delivery. The 2021 final rule realigns the nation's family planning program with nationally recognized standards of care for family planning and sexual health services delivered at Title X-funded sites. Specifically, the 2021 rule:

- Clearly defines quality healthcare as safe, effective, client-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable
- Incorporates a comprehensive definition of family planning that is aligned with the [Providing Quality Family Planning Services Recommendations](#)
- Requires all family planning services to be delivered consistent with nationally recognized standards of care, including restoring the requirement for nondirective pregnancy options counseling and referral.
- Adopts the QFP definition of client-centered care to help ensure that Title X services are delivered in a manner that is being respectful of, and responsive to, individual client preferences, needs, and values and where client values guide all clinical decisions

# 2021 Title X Final Rule SUMMARY

## Access

A hallmark of the Title X program is its essential role in supporting access to high-quality services delivered by highly qualified providers regardless of a patient's ability to pay, and the 2021 rule reinforces access as a central tenet of the program. Specifically, the 2021 rule:

- Eliminates the burdensome requirement established under the 2019 Title X rule for providers to maintain strict physical and financial separation of abortion services.
- Requires that Title X-funded sites not offering a broad range of methods on-site to provide a prescription to the client for their method of choice or referrals, as requested.
- Clarifies that the program's income verification requirement should not burden patients with low incomes or impede their access to care.
- Reaffirms adolescent confidentiality protections including that "Title X projects may not require consent of parents or guardians for the provision of services to minors, nor can any Title X project staff notify a parent or guardian before or after a minor has requested and/or received Title X family planning services."
- Enables a broader range of clinical services providers to direct Title X services and provide consultation for medical services.
- Incorporates the allowability of telehealth for Title X family planning services.

## Equity

Advancing equity for all, including people from low-income families, people of color, and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality, is a priority for the Title X program. The 2021 final rule was written to ensure that the predominantly low-income clients who rely on Title X services as their usual source of medical care have access to the same quality healthcare, including full medical information and referrals, that higher-income clients and clients with private insurance are able to access. Specifically, the 2021 final rule includes:

- Defines health equity as "when all persons have the opportunity to attain their full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances" and reinforces that Title X services should be equitable
- Requires all family planning services to be client-centered, culturally and linguistically appropriate, inclusive, and trauma-informed.
- Adds a new grant review criterion to assess the ability of prospective grantees to advance health equity.

October 2021