

AUGUST 2026 National Health Care Policy Updates

Department of Education Revises Professional Degree Definition

As a response to and legal action taken against the Department of Education for their final rule that had an exclusive list of professional degrees that get access to higher borrowing limits, the Department of Education released an interim list of more degrees that count as a professional degree. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) along with an interprofessional group of national organizations took legal action against the Department of Education to fight against the narrowing of the definition of professional degree. As a result, the Department of Education stayed part of the professional degree definition that will allow certain degrees to be identified as a professional degree. This includes multiple post-baccalaureate nursing degrees such as MSN, DNP, and DNAP. However, this list does not include a PhD in nursing. Although this is a step in the right direction, the exclusion of PhD in nursing is still a threat to the nation's supply of nurse scientists and faculty. ARN continues to advocate for the passage of the Nurse is a Professional Degree Act (H.R. 8659) to ensure that this does not happen again, and to include a PhD in nursing.

Administration Release a Rule that Narrows Definition of Medically Frail

The Trump administration released a guidance with rules for which Medicaid beneficiaries are exempted from the Medicaid work requirements that were passed as a part of the first budget reconciliation (H.R. 1) that was passed last July. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released this final rule that requires Medicaid beneficiaries to prove their medical frailty every six months and can only self-attest medical frailty one time. After one self-attestation, beneficiaries need documentation from a medical professional. Additionally, those who have a condition that is eligible for exemption must go a step further and prove that the severity of this condition prevents them from completing the work requirements. These new requirements are burdensome for both patients and medical professionals alike, who are now tasked with filling out a form at least twice a year. The administrative burden will likely cause people to be kicked off their insurance simply for not properly filling out the form. Additionally, some diseases such as cancer do preclude people from working for periods of time, meaning that a patient may lose their coverage if they are unable to meet the work requirements but do not fall into the exemption category. By losing their insurance, patients will not seek care, especially harming those who are most medically vulnerable and making their conditions worse.

ARN Submits Comments to OMB

On July 13, 2026, ARN submitted comments responding to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance. Specifically, ARN highlighted how the proposed changes that give political appointees control over the funding opportunities instead of relying on a peer review process put forth by this rule will be detrimental to rehabilitation research. ARN highlighted how

these changes would narrow the scope of funding for agencies because notice of funding opportunities (NOFOs) is intentionally broad to accommodate a wide range of funding opportunities. However, giving political appointees control over the NOFOs with the direction that NOFOs must further the priorities of the administration, it narrows the scope of potential research and prevents funding for essential research that may not appear to be furthering the priorities of the administration.

Additionally, this rule allows for high volatility in funding and funding opportunities. Since the administration changes frequently, one cannot be sure that their grant will survive an administration change. Unstable grant funding is detrimental because research builds upon itself, and each stage needs to be planned out as institutions performing research need security of funding to build infrastructure, staff, materials, and resources to perform research. ARN also highlighted concerns that moving away from a peer-review process will overlook essential research, as political appointees are not experts in the field and do not intimately know of the gaps in research.

Notice of Funding Opportunities

Below is a list of other funding opportunities for interested ARN members.

Community Partnered Nursing Research Centers (P20 Clinical Trial Optional) (PAR-25-439)

Leveraging Nursing Research to Advance Healthy School Environments for All (FOR-NR-25-002)

Limited Competition: Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Postdoctoral Research Training Grant for the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) Program (T32 Clinical Trial Not Allowed) (PAR-25-195)

NINR Mentoring Resources and Activities (FOR-NR-25-003)

Advancing Nutrition-related Research Across the Lifespan (FOR-NR-25-001)

Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP) for Health Professional Schools and Graduate Schools (FOR-PAR-25-420)

Strategies to Improve Health Outcomes and Reduce Health Disparities in Rural Populations (R01 Clinical Trial Optional) (FOR-NR-25-007)

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