



Progress in the First Year of the Mills Administration

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Maine Department of Health and Human Services

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Introduction

The [Maine Department of Health and Human Services](#) (DHHS) is dedicated to promoting health, safety, resilience, and opportunity for Maine people. The Department [provides](#) health and social services to approximately a third of the State's population, including children, families, older Mainers, and individuals with disabilities, mental illness, and substance use disorders. Throughout our work, DHHS strives to support three overarching goals:

Maine children grow up in safe, healthy, and supportive environments, allowing them to thrive throughout their lives.

All adults have the opportunity to work, live with independence, and have good health.

Older Mainers live with dignity in the place that balances their needs and preferences.

During the first year of the Mills Administration, DHHS has worked with legislators, community members, stakeholders, and other State agencies to support and implement policies that foster the health and wellbeing of Mainers of all ages. Results include:

- Covering cumulatively more than 56,000 people through the MaineCare (Medicaid) expansion – 44,441 at a point in time on December 20. Through the Governor's first executive order, as of [September 30](#), more than:
 - 14,000 expansion enrollees received mental health treatment
 - 5,700 received substance use disorder treatment, and
 - 2,500 have been screened for breast or colorectal cancers
- Protecting many of the 230,000 people in Maine with pre-existing conditions by ensuring that federal protections are enshrined in State law under the first bill of the session, [LD 1](#)
- Lowering drug costs and premiums for [1,800](#) older Mainers and people with disabilities
- Extending and increasing Food Supplement benefits to over [13,000](#) Mainers
- Bringing hundreds of millions in federal funding to Maine (e.g., [over \\$700 million](#) through the MaineCare expansion, over \$7 million for opioid treatment [capacity expansion](#) and [innovation](#))

The following pages summarize efforts to strengthen and improve health and human services in the State of Maine in 2019.

Expanding Health Care Access and Improving Affordability

Over the past year, the Mills administration and DHHS have worked to expand access to preventive and critical health services and to address challenges in affordability. These efforts span rural counties and city centers and impact Mainers of all ages and income levels. Beginning with [Executive Order #1](#) on the Governor's first day in office, initiatives have included:

- ❖ [Expanding MaineCare](#) eligibility to adults with income below 138 percent of the federal poverty level as approved by the voters in 2017
- ❖ Supporting the development and passage of [LD 1](#), codifying Affordable Care Act consumer protections, including those for people with pre-existing conditions, in Maine law
- ❖ Partnering with private foundations to [launch](#) the \$750,000 [CoverME](#) campaign to encourage enrollment in MaineCare and HealthCare.gov plans
- ❖ Securing \$2 million for an overhaul of the Department's online application for MaineCare, TANF, SNAP, Child Support, and Long-Term Services
- ❖ Committing to a [State-based Health Insurance Marketplace](#) (federal platform) for open enrollment in 2020 and insurance plan year 2021
- ❖ Starting rulemaking on a program to import lower-cost [prescription drugs](#) from Canada
- ❖ Working with the other Departments implementing a prescription drug affordability board and transparent Pharmacy Benefits Managers
- ❖ Expanding low-income assistance programs for Medicare premiums and drug coverage
- ❖ Launching the [Rural Health Transformation](#) initiative to support access to services and tackle challenges in our rural health system
- ❖ [Expanding access to abortion care](#) and other reproductive health services by broadening the scope of practice and allowing coverage with State general funds
- ❖ Ending a prohibition on the use of Medicaid funds for eligible transgender health care services
- ❖ Implementing the provider reporting system for the new option of "[Death with Dignity](#)"
- ❖ Supporting the restoration of funding for school-based health centers
- ❖ Supporting the Bureau of Insurance's development and implementation of limits on short-term and self-funded health plans which raise private insurance premiums

Improving Behavioral Health and Tackling the Opioid Epidemic

Strengthening the behavioral health system while addressing the ongoing opioid epidemic has been a major focus of DHHS in 2019. In partnership with the Governor's Director of Opioid Response and other State departments, DHHS has taken a number of steps to support those affected by Substance Use Disorder while improving the broader behavioral health system and investing in prevention. These efforts include:

- ❖ Eliminating Medicaid limits on medication-assisted treatment
- ❖ Increasing reimbursement rates for medication-assisted treatment retrospective to July 1
- ❖ Distributed 12,000 doses of naloxone, with 50 known successful reversals
- ❖ Trained 200 additional recovery coaches to date
- ❖ Supported 9 recovery community centers with 3 more in the works
- ❖ Supported medication-assisted treatment in 8 jails and prison system with 5 more in the works
- ❖ Supported existing needle exchange programs and expanding certified programs in 2020
- ❖ Revising the opioid and behavioral health homes models in Medicaid
- ❖ Securing a [\\$2 million](#) SUPPORT Act grant to expand substance use disorder treatment capacity
- ❖ Expanding needed [inpatient capacity at Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center](#), which was recertified by the Joint Commission, and selected a new permanent Superintendent
- ❖ Overseeing [recertification](#) of Riverview Psychiatric Center and reaching a full complement of permanent medical staff
- ❖ Starting development of a 24/7 Substance Use Disorder treatment locator to help connect individuals with the right level of treatment
- ❖ Adding 36 new Mental Health Residential Program beds across the State
- ❖ Developed a standard operating procedure and made other [improvements](#) to the Intensive Case Management program to support successful re-entry into the community
- ❖ Improving access for veterans to mental health case management services
- ❖ Working with Pew Charitable Trust to map mental health and substance use treatment services and capacity in the State and Case Western Reserve University Center for Evidence Based Practice to identify potential system barriers, challenges, strengths, and solutions

Strengthening Child Health and Welfare

Under the Administration of Governor Mills, DHHS acted swiftly to address longstanding weaknesses in Maine's child welfare system, while also developing strategies to ensure sustainable improvements to child safety and health over the long term. This includes the work of the Children's Cabinet, aimed at improving early childhood development as well as supporting at-risk youth. Highlights in 2019 include:

- ❖ Developed and started implementation of comprehensive child welfare and children's behavioral health strategies
- ❖ Added more than 130 staff to the Office of Child and Family Services, including the addition of 32 child protective caseworkers
- ❖ Launched a Statewide public education campaign called [Safe Sleep for ME](#)
- ❖ Extended the eligibility for Public Health Nursing home visits to all newborns
- ❖ Established a web-based, publicly accessible [dashboard](#) of key data indicators for Child Welfare, Children's Behavioral Health, and Early Childhood Education
- ❖ Made a competitive award to Deloitte Consulting, LLP for development of a new Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System to modernize and improve data and workflow
- ❖ Implemented a [modernized intake telephone system](#) for child welfare, increasing the number of calls answered live and decreasing the rate of abandoned calls and wait times
- ❖ Addressed afterhours coverage by directing contracted staff to provide supervision of children in custody while in the emergency department or other temporary placements
- ❖ Established a Cooperative Agreement with the USM Muskie School to make improvements in policy, training systems, and workforce development
- ❖ Developed and implemented a pilot visit coaching model that focuses on the strengths and needs of the family and children
- ❖ Chosen as one of 10 states to participate in the federal Maternal Opioid Misuse (MOM) Model to coordinate care of pregnant and postpartum Medicaid beneficiaries with opioid use disorder
- ❖ Investing \$2 million toward opioid use and mental health disorder prevention among children
- ❖ Hired a Chief Child Health Officer to ensure kids get the full range of health and human services
- ❖ Developing Statewide social and emotional learning programs

Strengthening Long-Term Services and Supports

With the input of stakeholders and community members, the Department has worked over the past year to strengthen the full system of long-term services and supports in the State. The year's accomplishments include:

- ❖ Becoming an [Age Friendly State](#) which includes strengthening community supports
- ❖ Establishing an [advisory group](#) to report in early 2020 [on ideas to create](#) more community-based options and care coordination
- ❖ Increasing nursing facility rates [by roughly 5.5 percent](#) and adding 167 home- and community-based waiver slots (Section 21)
- ❖ Creating a crisis intake unit dedicated to adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities
- ❖ Requiring the licensing of one- and two-bed group homes to ensure client safety
- ❖ Increasing the number of intake workers for adult protective services to better respond to incoming reports
- ❖ Establishing an Elder Justice Partnership through [executive order](#)
- ❖ Developing a [draft strategy](#) to serve more adults with responsive and inclusive services

Supporting Work, Training, and Child Care

- ❖ Implementing policies to smooth the benefits “cliff” in eligibility for TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid
- ❖ Tripling the TANF [Working Families Supplement benefit](#) and expanding support [for English language education](#) to facilitate work engagement and successful transitions
- ❖ [Doubling](#) support for car insurance and increasing travel support for TANF participants
- ❖ Preparing for a January 2021 start date for [Higher Opportunities for Pathways to Employment](#) which supports education and child care for parents with income above previous limits
- ❖ Increasing funding to [Jobs for Maine Graduates](#) by nearly \$1 million
- ❖ Reorganizing the [child care subsidy](#) program to increase participation

Improving Public Health

Throughout 2019, DHHS and its Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) focused on rebuilding internal capacity to better serve Maine people and respond to health crises, while also addressing emerging public health trends. These actions include:

- ❖ Investing in tobacco cessation (\$10 million over 2 years) and using additional funding from tobacco tax harmonization to [raise awareness of the health risks of vaping](#)
- ❖ Implementing universal lead screening for children
- ❖ Preparing to eliminate religious and philosophical exemptions for childhood vaccine requirements in 2021 (subject to a March 2020 ballot referendum)
- ❖ Hiring more public health nurses, revitalizing the program and bringing total staff to 39
- ❖ Helped ensure asylum seekers who arrived in Portland in June were immunized, medically screened and treated when needed
- ❖ Worked with partners to limit the spread of acute lung illness associated with vaping, Hepatitis A, influenza, measles, pertussis, and tick-borne disease among others
- ❖ Leading a working group of the Governor's Climate Change Council on public health preparedness and response
- ❖ Restoring the publicly available [Health Alert Network](#) alerts to improve awareness

Promoting Food and Housing Security

- ❖ Expanding supportive housing for people in recovery
- ❖ Implementing a Medicaid technical assistance grant to develop ways to facilitate affordable housing options for Medicaid enrollees
- ❖ Increasing access to general assistance (primarily used for housing costs) by including homelessness in the eligibility criteria for emergency assistance and restoring eligibility for certain asylum seekers
- ❖ Expanding access to Food Supplement through geographic waivers, the elimination of asset tests for older Mainers and people with disabilities, an increase in the standard utility allowance, and simplified reporting
- ❖ Partnering with the Department of Agriculture and Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets to support the use of Food Supplement benefits at local farmers' markets through a \$90,000 grant for point-of-sale equipment
- ❖ Discontinuing the [use of photos](#) on Electronic Benefit Transfer cards, putting an end to an ineffective policy

Promoting Fiscal Responsibility

As the Department pursues its work providing essential health and social services to the State, we are also continually reviewing financial and operational processes in order to effectively respond to changes at the State and federal level, identify areas of improvement, and better serve the people of Maine. In 2019, some of these activities included:

- ❖ Hiring a Deputy Commissioner of Finance to assist the Department in long-term financial planning and management
- ❖ Repaying the balance of the \$85 million in debt stemming from the decertification of Riverview Psychiatric Center during the previous administration
- ❖ Submitting 36 cases of fraud within the SNAP program for prosecution, totaling nearly \$317,000
- ❖ Conducted a [review](#) of over \$80 million in Departmentwide transportation contracts to align performance measures, work through contract amendments, and prepare for future improvements
- ❖ Resuming the practice of regularly applying for federal and other grants throughout the Department

Strengthening the Department

The Department's ability to fulfil its mission depends on its workforce, systems, and performance. A major area of effort this year has been restoring capacity and supporting improvements. In 2019, some of these activities included:

- ❖ Promoting transparency through posting [quarterly snapshots](#) of key statistics for each office, a monthly OCFS [Dashboard](#), periodic Department [updates](#), and a weekly MaineCare (Medicaid) [expansion report](#)
- ❖ Reopening the DHHS office in Calais
- ❖ Posting and filling 462 job that the Legislature had previously authorized and funded, including a long-vacant Manager of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- ❖ Restoring past practices like an employee appreciation committee, out-of-state travel to important conferences, and engagement of staff with legislators and stakeholders

Conclusion

With the first year of the Mills Administration now coming to a close, taking stock of our progress will help us prepare for even greater progress in the years ahead. We look forward to continuing our work with our many stakeholders and partners to continue strengthening and improving the health and wellbeing of Maine people.