

National RN Case Manager Certificate Program **Policy Shaping U.S. Healthcare**

Nurses are best able to advocate for patients and contribute to the delivery of safe, high quality healthcare when they understand the history of health policy and how it has shaped the U.S. healthcare system. Recognizing the role of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in ensuring the effective implementation of these policies is key to practice.

Historical Highlights:

- 1798 Passage of an act for the relief of sick and disabled seamen, which established a federal network of hospitals for the care of merchant seamen, forerunner of today's U.S. Public Health Service.
- 1862 President Lincoln appointed a chemist, Charles M. Wetherill, to serve in the new Department of Agriculture. This was the beginning of the Bureau of Chemistry, forerunner to the Food and Drug Administration.
- 1865 President Lincoln signed a law to establish the first federal soldiers' facility for Civil War Veterans of the Union Army. Established the national soldiers and sailor's asylum which later became veterans' homes and a precursor to the VA. These homes were founded on the principles of Florence Nightingale and the U.S. Sanitary Commission.
- 1871 Appointment of the first Supervising Surgeon (later called the Surgeon General) for the Marine Hospital Service, which had been organized the prior year.
- 1873 First-ever government institution, the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers created specifically for honorably discharged volunteer soldiers.
- 1878 The National Quarantine Act was passed, beginning the transfer of quarantine functions from the states to the federal Marine Hospital Service.
- 1887 The federal government opened a one-room laboratory on Staten Island for research on disease, a very early precursor to the National Institutes of Health.
- 1891 Immigration legislation was passed, assigning the Marine Hospital Service the responsibility for medical examination of arriving immigrants.
- 1902 Conversion of the Marine Hospital Service into the Public Health and Marine Hospital Service in recognition of its expanding activities in the field of public health. In 1912, the name was shortened to the Public Health Service.

- 1906 The Pure Food and Drugs Act was passed, authorizing the government to monitor the purity of foods and the safety of medicines, now a responsibility of the FDA.
- 1912 President Theodore Roosevelt's first White House Conference urged creation of the Children's Bureau to combat exploitation of children.
- 1918 Congress leased hundreds of private hospitals and hotels to address the needs of returning injured World War I Veterans and began a program of building new hospitals.
- 1921 The Bureau of Indian Affairs Health Division, forerunner to the Indian Health Service, was created.
- 1930 The National Institute (later Institutes) of Health was created out of the Public Health Service's Hygienic Laboratory.
- The Veterans Administration was established as an independent agency to serve veterans and their families.
- 1935 Social Security Act was passed.
- 1938 Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act was passed.
- 1939 The Federal Security Agency was created, bringing together related federal activities in the fields of health, education, and social insurance.
- 1946 Communicable Disease Center was established, forerunner of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- 1953 The Cabinet-level Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) was created under President Eisenhower, officially coming into existence April 11, 1953. In 1979, the Department of Education Organization Act was signed into law, providing for a separate Department of Education. HEW became the Department of Health and Human Services, officially arriving on May 4, 1980.
- 1955 Licensing of the Salk polio vaccine.
- Indian Health Service was transferred to HHS from the Department of Interior.
- 1961 First White House Conference on Aging.
- 1962 Migrant Health Act was passed, providing support for clinics serving agricultural workers.
- 1964 Release of the first Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health.



1965 Medicare and Medicaid programs were created, making comprehensive health care available to millions of Americans.

Older Americans Act created the nutritional and social programs administered by HHS' Administration on Aging.

Head Start program was created.

1966 International Smallpox Eradication program was established.

Community Health Center and Migrant Health Center programs were launched.

1970 National Health Service Corps was created.

1971 National Cancer Act was signed into law.

1975 Child Support Enforcement and Paternity Establishment Program was established.

1977 The Health Care Financing Administration was created to manage Medicare and Medicaid separately from the Social Security Administration.

Worldwide eradication of smallpox, led by the U.S. Public Health Service.

1979 The Department of Education Organization Act was signed into law, providing for a separate Department of Education. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) became the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on May 4, 1980.

1980 Federal funding was provided to states for foster care and adoption assistance.

1981 Identification of AIDS - In 1984, the HIV virus was identified by the Public Health Service and French scientists. In 1985, a blood test to detect HIV was licensed.

1984 National Organ Transplantation Act was signed into law.

1988 JOBS program and federal support for childcare was created.

McKinney Act was passed to provide health care to the homeless.

Veterans Administration becomes the Department of Veterans Affairs.

1989 The Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (now the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality) was created.



- 1990 Human Genome Project was established.
- Nutrition Labeling and Education Act was passed, authorizing the food label.
- Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resource Emergency (CARE) Act began providing support for people with HIV/AIDS
- 1993 Vaccines for Children Program was established, providing free immunizations to all children in low-income families.
- 1995 The Social Security Administration became an independent agency.
- 1996 Welfare reform under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act was enacted.
- The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) was enacted.
- 1997 The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was created, enabling states to extend health coverage to more uninsured children.
- 1999 The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 was signed, making it possible for millions of Americans with disabilities to join the workforce without fear of losing their Medicaid and Medicare coverage. It also modernized the employment services system for people with disabilities.
- Initiative to combat bioterrorism was launched.
- 2000 Publication of human genome sequencing.
- 2001 The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid was created, replacing the Health Care Financing Administration. HHS responds to the nation's first bioterrorism attack - delivery of anthrax through the mail.
- 2002 The Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness (now the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response) was created to coordinate efforts against bioterrorism and other emergency health threats.
- 2003 The Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 was enacted - the most significant expansion of Medicare since its enactment. It included a prescription drug benefit.
- 2010 The Affordable Care Act was signed into law, putting in place comprehensive U.S. health insurance reforms.



Check for Additional Policy Updates at: <https://www.hhs.gov/about/historical-highlights/index.html>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

<https://www.hhs.gov/about/agencies/hhs-agencies-and-offices/index.html>

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is the nation's principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services.

Eight of the eleven operating agencies, and three staff offices, are designated as part of the Public Health Service within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):

- [National Institutes of Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Indian Health Service](#)
- [Food and Drug Administration](#)
- [Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry](#)
- [Health Resources and Services Administration](#)
- [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)
- [Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health^{\[4\]}](#)
- [Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response](#)
- [Office of Global Affairs](#)

The three other operating agencies of HHS are designated human services agencies and are not part of the Public Health Service. These are the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#), [Administration for Children and Families](#), and [Administration for Community Living](#).

The Veterans Health Administration (VA) <https://www.va.gov/>. The Veterans Health Administration is part of the Department of Veterans Affairs and collaborates with CMS and HHS to ensure comprehensive care for veterans. Active and deployed military receive care under the Department of Defense.

