



- [Home](#)
- [SF STAT!](#)
- [Current Articles](#)
- [CURRENT ISSUE](#)
- [Online Newspapers](#)
- [WEEKLY NEWSLETTERS](#)
- [Media Kit](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Business Directory](#)
- [Video Interviews](#)
- [Contact](#)

Select Page

Agency for Health Care Administration Drives Transparency and Accountability in Florida's Health Care System in 2022

December 29, 2022 – Today, the Agency for Health Care Administration highlighted over-the-year efforts to further Governor DeSantis' promise of delivering meaningful health outcomes across our state. Since day one, Governor DeSantis has made clear his vision to ensure that Florida's health care

system is the most cost-effective, transparent, and highest quality in the nation. Undoubtedly, Governor DeSantis' bold vision continues to move the needle in providing better health care for all Floridians.

"As Secretary for the Agency of Health Administration, I've been honored to support Governor DeSantis in his dynamic agenda and work alongside the dedicated public servants who tirelessly execute the Agency's mission to pave a pathway to a healthier Florida," said **Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Simone Marstiller**. "While I am proud of all we have accomplished in 2022, I am confident it is only getting started. Under Governor DeSantis, the Agency will continue to strengthen Florida's health care system by prioritizing Florida's seniors and most vulnerable, protecting Florida's children and youth, ensuring resources are available for our health care providers, and continuing to look for opportunities to increase the quality of care for all Floridians."

Key accomplishments by the Agency in 2022 include:

Protecting Kids from Irreversible Gender Surgeries and Drugs Pushed by Woke Ideologists

- Based on the guidance from the Florida Department of Health and in accordance with Chapter 59G-1035, Florida Administrative Code, Agency Secretary Simone Marstiller requested that the Florida Medicaid program review whether treatments for gender dysphoria are consistent with generally accepted professional medical standards.
- In June, the Agency issued a [report](#) based on its research and analysis as well as five written assessments provided by subject-matter experts that the Agency retained for this purpose. The report recommended against covering sex reassignment treatments as reimbursable health services because they are not consistent with generally accepted professional medical

- standards and are experimental and investigational.
- In August, the Agency promulgated a rule based on its report. The rule, codified in Rule 59G-1.050(7)(a), states that “Florida Medicaid does not cover” as “treatment of gender dysphoria,” the use of (1) “puberty blockers,” (2) “hormones or hormone antagonists,” (3) “sex reassignment surgeries,” or (4) “other procedures that alter primary or secondary sexual characteristics.” The FDA found some of these “treatments” may cause irreversible damage and severe long-term health issues, including brain aneurysms.

Safeguarding the Right to Life in Florida

- In April, Governor DeSantis [signed the Reducing Fetal and Infant Mortality Act](#) to protect the lives of Florida’s most vulnerable by prohibiting all abortions after 15 weeks of gestation. The most significant protections for life in Florida history.
- The Agency visited all licensed abortion clinics in Florida to ensure that they were in compliance with Florida law and following safety protocols when providing health services to women, upholding abortion clinics to the same standards as all other licensed health care facilities in the state. These visits resulted in The Agency issuing Emergency Suspension Orders to those not following the law and compromising patient safety.

Ensuring Comprehensive Cancer Care

- To support cancer centers across the state, Governor and First Lady Casey DeSantis dedicated a record \$100 million for cancer research and care in Florida’s 2022-2023 Budget, an increase of \$37 million, or nearly 60%, over prior year funding. The Freedom First Budget included more than \$150 million to support individuals enrolled in Medicaid who receive services at Florida’s

National Cancer Institute designated cancer centers.

- Spearheaded by First Lady Casey DeSantis, the Agency worked with other state health care leaders to [launch Florida Cancer Connect](#), an initiative that provides information on cancer treatment, caregiver tools, and stories from brave Floridians who have fought this disease on one centralized website.

Empowering Patients and Ensuring Individual Freedoms

- In April, Secretary Marstiller and other state leaders [joined Governor DeSantis to sign](#) the *No Patient Left Alone Act*, guaranteeing Florida families the fundamental right to visit their loved ones receiving care in hospitals, hospices, and long-term care facilities. No health care facility in Florida may require a vaccine as a condition of visitation, and every health care facility must allow their residents and patients to be hugged by their loved ones.
- In 2019, the Governor directed the Agency to expedite the development of Florida's transparency web tools to offer facility-level pricing and quality information through [FloridaHealthFinder](#) and [Florida Health Price Finder](#), to support consumer awareness of Florida's online health care data and pricing transparency tools. By linking quality and price information, Floridians have a clearer picture to make more informed health care decisions.
- Additionally, the Governor's Freedom First Budget invested nearly \$4 million to increase transparency in prescription drug prices. The funds support the modernization of Florida's prescription drug price transparency website known as [MyFloridaRx](#) and complete additional analysis on Medicaid pharmacy claims for potential fraud, waste, and abuse.

Ensuring Cost-Effective Care through Transparency in Health Care and Prescription Drug Prices

- In addition to optimizing Florida's buying power to deliver high quality care at the lowest cost to taxpayers, the Agency continues to identify new opportunities to increase access to high quality, cost-effective care for Floridians who need it most.
- Under the leadership of Governor DeSantis, the Agency is marshaling efforts to increase access to essential medications for vulnerable Floridians while saving taxpayer dollars through the Canadian Prescription Drug Importation Program.
- In July, Governor DeSantis [issued Executive Order 22-164](#) to provide meaningful reforms to state agency contracts with Pharmacy Benefit Managers and directed the Agency to implement provisions in the Freedom First Budget to directly negotiate prescription drug prices ineligible for importation, including insulin and epinephrine. This will reinforce the demand for Florida's Canadian Prescription Drug Importation Program and provide another avenue to impact the price Floridians pay for prescription drugs.
- Additionally, in July, the Agency filed a [Freedom of Information Act Request](#) with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration regarding the status of its review of Florida's landmark Canadian Drug Importation Program. In August, Governor DeSantis announced a lawsuit against the FDA in response to its unreasonable delay in approving Florida's proposal for its Canadian Prescription Drug Importation Program.

Supporting Providers in Retaining a Skilled Workforce

- Over the past year, the Agency has heard from healthcare professionals across the state working to address record increases in operational costs and challenges in recruiting and retaining staff.
- Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature understand the importance of this challenge. They provided a \$486

million investment to increase wages for workers in our Medicaid provider offices.

Delivering for Florida's Uniquely Gifted

- The Agency for Health Care Administration and Agency for Persons with Disabilities announced the approval of up to [\\$502.7 million in Federal Medical Assistance Percentage \(FMAP\) funding](#) to be distributed to eligible providers.
- The state proposed a historic amount of financial assistance for direct care service providers. With the recent approval of Florida's FMAP proposal, funds will be distributed to enhance, expand, and strengthen Home and Community-Based Services offerings for Floridians with disabilities and to support healthcare workers under the Medicaid program.

Supporting our Hospital Systems and Health Care Providers During Hurricane Ian

- At the height of Hurricane Ian, the Agency worked with the Florida Department of Health to evacuate over 9,000 people from 200 health care facilities that were in mandatory evacuation zones or impacted by the severe weather.
- Ahead of Hurricane Ian, the Agency ensured that all nursing homes and assisted living facilities had generators in compliance with Florida law. This helped all nursing homes remain operational and with power while the southwest Florida community was impacted by the storm and recovery.

Financial Support for Floridians in Need

- This year, the Agency oversaw more than \$3.6 billion in record funding for supplemental health care operation programs, including the Low Income Pool, Hospital Directed Payment Program, and Indirect Graduate Medical

Education payment programs.

- These programs allow uninsured Floridians to receive health care by making payments to providers. Program participants are subject to the Agency's Bureau of Medicaid Program Finance to set the reimbursement rates and monitor the financial performance and health of Medicaid managed care plans.

About AHCA

The Agency for Health Care Administration is focused on increasing the quality of care and outcomes for all Floridians, especially those residing in Long Term Care facilities. In support of the Governor's Seniors First strategy, the Agency continues prioritizing Florida's seniors for emergency and non-emergency operations. Additionally, the Agency is focused on supporting health care provider workforce needs to ensure the highest quality care is received by Floridians.

South Florida Hospital News and Healthcare Report's number one goal is top quality healthcare journalism written and edited for the region's most successful, powerful healthcare business executives and professionals.



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