

VNS Health Statement on CMS Home Health Perspective Payment System Final Rule for CY 2026

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From VNS Health

Policy

From VNS Health President & CEO, Dan Savitt:

In New York State, access to home health care has declined 26% since 2018. More than 260,000 New Yorkers are unable to receive the care they need. Entire communities, from the Bronx to more rural areas have become “home health deserts.” In these communities, older adults and their families have nowhere to turn.

We appreciate that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) reduced the proposed 9% cut to 4% in the final rule. This meaningful change reflects that CMS listened to concerns raised by providers, patients, and lawmakers. But the final rule still results in a reduction for 2026 that brings cumulative cuts to nearly 14% since 2020, and saddles home health agencies with \$4.7 billion in future reductions. At a time of rising labor costs, workforce shortages, and increased patient complexity, these reductions seriously destabilize a benefit that millions of older adults rely on.

Further, despite consistent evidence from hospitals, agencies, caregivers, and families, the final rule fails to recognize how repeated rate cuts are worsening the shortage of home health services for Medicare patients. The true problem lies in how CMS sets payment rates, using assumptions and analyses that don't reflect what's actually happening in the field, and making the system easier for bad actors to exploit. As a result, payments fall short of the true cost of care, making it even harder for older adults to get the home health support they need.

We urge CMS to use its authority to reopen rulemaking, correct distorted data, and address abusive and exploitative behavior impacting the home health payment system. VNS Health is committed to working with CMS and Congress to ensure that home health care remains a stable, accessible, and high-quality service for America's seniors. Together, we can preserve the promise of care at home for every family that needs it.

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