



Working for a Better World
a grassroots advocacy organization founded in 1984

February 2023 Newsletter

January Meeting Review **Medicare Privatization:** **Medicare Advantage & ACO/REACH** **A threat to seniors and the future of Medicare**

For recording of meeting, visit
<http://www.womenfororangecounty.org/>

OR

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/83k7gtxne_N7eADvO2CjzLUO9Nn1YhTveHV44ba8LUnjUbJV1dzLFysYdAmjdlQ-.G9f_ZYv8Pg7paxO6
Passcode: I665PN\$X

Dr. Healey provided an excellent overview of the history of Medicare including the differences between traditional Medicare, Medicare Advantage and ACO/REACH. She also apprised us of the move to privatize Medicare which threatens the future of Traditional Medicare along with actions we can take to stop the privatization of Medicare.

Several state and local organizations have mobilized to formulate resolutions to stop ACO/REACH. You can visit Physicians for a National Health Program (<https://pnhp.org/>) for further information and to sign onto the petition to stop ACO/REACH. You can also contact your local congressional legislators and the White House expressing your concerns and request to stop privatization of Medicare.

Currently California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) www.californiaalliance.org has crafted a resolution calling on the California state legislature to oppose ACO/REACH as well as sending letters to CMS, HHS, President Biden and the entire California congressional delegation urging them to end this program. There will be no cost to California, nor does it require the governor's signature. The resolution is currently in review.

Below is a one-page primer on Direct Contracting (ACO/REACH). Following the primer is a link for a more detailed explanation including helpful charts and visuals.

If you have any further questions, Dr. Healey graciously shared her email address:
khealey.ent@gmail.com

Pertinent Contact information:

CMS: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services <https://www.cms.gov/>

HHS: US Department of Health & Human Services <https://www.hhs.gov/>

President Biden: Call: 1-202-456-1111 or write: president@whitehouse.gov

Senators & Congress:

<https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>

<https://www.congress.gov/contact-us>

Direct Contracting: Quietly Handing Medicare to Wall Street



The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services "[Innovation Center](#)" recently [announced](#) that **by 2030, they will move all Traditional Medicare enrollees into a "care relationship" with a 3rd party middleman**, without seniors' knowledge or consent, and without Congressional oversight.



What is the Medicare Direct Contracting (DC) Program?

DC is a pilot program that aims to enroll every Traditional Medicare beneficiary into a third-party "Direct Contracting Entity" (DCE). Instead of paying doctors and hospitals directly for care, Medicare gives DCEs a monthly payment to cover a defined portion of each seniors' medical expenses, allowing DCEs to keep as profit what they don't pay for in care. Virtually any type of company can apply to be a DCE, including commercial insurers, venture capital investors, and even dialysis centers. Applicants are [approved](#) by CMS without input from Congress.

How do DCEs make money?

First, because Medicare pays DCEs more money for sicker patients, DCEs have a strong incentive to engage in a type of fraud called "upcoding," meaning they [exaggerate](#) — or falsify — seniors' diagnoses. Second, DCEs are allowed to keep as profit and overhead what they don't pay for in health services, a dangerous financial incentive to restrict seniors' care. Former CMS Administrator Dr. Don Berwick and former CMS Innovation Center director Dr. Rick Gilfillan [estimate](#) that DCEs may spend as little as 60% of Medicare payments on patient care, keeping 40% as overhead and profit.



How are Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in DCEs?

Seniors in Traditional Medicare may be "auto-aligned" if their primary care physician is affiliated with that DCE. CMS automatically [searches](#) two years of seniors' claims history — without their consent or knowledge — to find *any visits* with a participating DCE provider as the basis for aligning them with that DCE.

Why haven't I heard about DCEs?

Most doctors, seniors, and even members of Congress have not heard of the DC program for a good reason. It was created during the Trump Administration by the CMS "[Innovation Center](#)," whose mission is to test and implement health payment models *without* Congressional approval.

What happens next?

The DC "pilot phase" includes [53 DCEs](#) in 38 states, potentially covering [30 million](#) of the 36 million Traditional Medicare beneficiaries. If left unchecked, DCEs could essentially privatize Traditional Medicare within the next few years. A new grassroots [movement](#) has formed to stop DCEs. Thousands of doctors and other advocates have signed a [petition](#) demanding that Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra halt the DC program, provide real oversight of CMS' Innovation Center, and protect Medicare for future generations.

Created November 2021

pnhp.org/DCEFactSheet



For a more detailed Primer on ACO/REACH from PNHP:
[Primer on ACO/REACH from PNHP](#)

Membership

Members and friends should have already received the 2023 membership reminder letter by mail with a remittance envelope. Dues remain at \$40 for individual memberships, \$60 for couples, \$20.00 for students/low-income individuals and \$100 for sustaining memberships.

If you have not received your membership letter and would like to join, go to <http://www.womenfororangecounty.org> membership, then print the membership application, fill it in, and mail it with your check to:

W4OC
P.O. Box 5402
Irvine, CA 92626-4502

As always, any donation will be gratefully accepted and are much appreciated. Thank you for your continued support.

2023 Calendar

We will continue to email our monthly newsletters and meeting flyers

Meetings will continue to be offered on the
3rd Monday of the month

March 20

The Climate Crisis and how it is affecting us all.

July 17

The Dismantling of Public Education & Why you should care

October 16

Is there Justice in the Criminal Justice System?
(including the plight of women in prison)

Please note that meeting topics, locations, and/or dates may change if our speakers or panelists have unavoidable changes in their schedules.

Meetings will be via Zoom,
hybrid or in-person meetings.
Hybrid and in-person meetings will take place at the
Irvine Ranch Water District Duck Club
15 Riparian View, Irvine

The Great American Write-In
at The Delhi Center in Santa Ana
Saturday, May 6, 2023

41st Annual Suffrage Day Luncheon
at the Hacienda in Santa Ana
Saturday, August 26, 2023

Meeting flyers, monthly newsletters, our webpage, and Facebook will provide more detailed meeting and event information.

Anyone who wants to help with any of our events should contact our president, Carol Tuch, at (949) 242-0253 or email at womenforoc@aol.com

We hope you will consider attending

Americans United for Separation of Church and State-OC
Saturday, February 18th at 4 pm
Hybrid meeting – Zoom & In-person

UCI Law School Dean: Austen Parrish

Meet the new Dean of the UCI Law School, Austen Parrish.

Dean Parrish will discuss the Law School and the plans for the school as it moves forward, as well as Legal Education generally.

Register at - <https://www.mobilize.us/au/event/545625/>
In Person: Irvine Ranch Water District Community Room
15500 San Canyon Ave., Irvine, CA
For more information, www.au-oc.org

Other events that might interest you:

The **World Affairs Council of Orange County** will present an exclusive interview of Goodwill Ambassador Yusra Mardini and screening of “The Swimmers” on Thursday, Feb. 16, at Soka University in Aliso Viejo.

The **World Affairs Council** will also present “Putin’s Ukrainian Misadventure: What has Russia Lost?” featuring William Pomeranz on Tuesday, March 7. For more information www.worldaffairsCouncil.org/events or call 949354-3180.

Planned Parenthood has a monthly newsletter listing upcoming events and ways to become more involved in local Planned Parenthood advocacy work. February events include LGBTQ+ Leadership Council meeting on Thurs, Feb. 9, 12pm-1pm on Zoom; Advocacy Ambassador Training Sat, Feb. 25, 10am-2pm. Information available at PublicAffairs@PPOSBC.org

UCI School of Law is a visionary law school committed to enriching our communities through public service. They present many excellent free-to-the-public events with online registration.

For more information: <https://calendar.law.uci.edu/>

You may also sign-up for monthly newsletter and events at UCI Law:

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/TzHtpJy>

Supporters of Public Education-OC presents meetings and activities to provide opportunities to learn about advocacy on issues in Orange County schools.

Information- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SOPEOC/> or email:

sope.oc@gmail.com.

League of Women Voters/National Institute for Civil Discourse Network

Resources News has listing of February events honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For news and information email: needciviltalk@gmail.com or Cheryl Graeve

at cgraeve@arizona.edu

Board of Directors

We currently have eight members on our board of directors who plan and take care of the business of Women For. If anyone is interested in finding out more about becoming a board member, contact any current board member: Carol Tuch @ 949-242-0253, Londa Woods, Peggy Goetz, Ellen Tewell, Marilyn Vassos, Steph Campbell, Sharon O'Hara, or Felicity Figueroa.

Other contact information is on our website at

<http://www.womenfororangecounty.org/>.

Legislative Update 2023

Women For: Orange County supports the following legislative bills.

** Denotes new legislation involvement since last Newsletter

Although not legislation, Women For: Orange County has also supported:

We signed on to a Letter to stop the ACO/REACH pilot program

Addressed to Honorable Xavier Becerra (Sec. of HHS) & Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
(Admin for CMS)

womenforoc@aol.com

<http://www.womenfororangecounty.org>

Please 'like' our WF:OC Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/Women-For-Orange-County-180712315298354/