TAHP TEXAS COVERED
HEALTH CARE CONFERENCE + EXPO

CONFERENCE AGENDA: NOVEMBER 2-4, 2026

The 2026 conference has been approved for a total of 12.5 CLE hours by the State Bar of Texas; course number 174338814.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2026

4:00 pm - 8:00 pm **Expo Move In** Moontower Hall (Level 2)

All exhibitors are allowed to move in and set up their booths. Set up must be complete by 10am on Monday.

5:00 pm - 6:30 pm **Early Networking Reception • Sponsored by: NTT Data** Moontower Hall Foyer (Level 2)

Kick off Texas Covered with curated cocktails, light bites, and casual conversation. This early evening reception offers a relaxed setting to connect with TAHP staff, fellow attendees, and industry peers before the full conference schedule begins.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2026

7:00 am - 10:00 am **Expo Hall Open for Booth Set-Up** Moontower Hall (Level 2)

All exhibitors are allowed to move in and set-up their booths. Set up must be complete by 10am.

8:00 am - 3:00 pm **Alivi Health Café • Sponsored by: Alivi Health** Moontower Hall Foyer (Level 2)

Stop by for a made-to-order hot or cold coffee, complete with custom Alivi Health latte art.

8:30 am - 5:30 pm **Registration Desk Opens • Sponsored by: Clearlink Partners** Moontower Hall Foyer (Level 2)

Start your day by checking in at the registration desk to pick up your badge and conference materials. TAHP staff will be available to answer questions and help you get settled before the sessions begin.

9:30 am - 9:40 am **Opening Remarks and Welcome** Waller Ballroom (Level 3)

***Jamie Dudensing**, President and CEO, Texas Association of Health Plans*

9:40 am - 10:30 am **Opening Keynote - Bedside to bench: Reinventing Medicine with AI** Waller Ballroom (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Faisal Tai**, MD, Chief Executive Officer, PsychPlus*

Speaker: ***Ziad Obermeyer**, MD, Associate Professor and Blue Cross of California Distinguished Professor, UC Berkeley*

Artificial intelligence is reinventing medical discovery by learning directly from raw clinical data, such as images and waveforms. UC Berkeley's Dr. Ziad Obermeyer explores how rebooting the flow of ideas from "bedside to bench" is identifying hidden health disparities, accelerating clinical innovation, and transforming our understanding of patient risk.

10:40 am - 11:30 am **Health Care on the Ballot: Midterms, Affordability, and the Fight Ahead** CLE

Waller Ballroom (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Jason Prigge,** Vice President General Manager of Directed Spend, Optum Financial*

Speaker: ***David Merritt**, Senior Vice President, External Affairs, Blue Cross Blue Shield Association*

The midterms will help determine the next round of federal health care debates. This session will break down how Washington politics could influence the issues health plans are watching most, from affordability and coverage to regulation, public programs, and access to care. Attendees will hear what is driving both parties, where bipartisan action may still be possible, and what health plans should watch after Election Day.

11:30 am - 12:55 pm **Lone Star Luncheon: Networking in the Expo Hall** Moontower Hall (Level 2)

Enjoy a taste of Texas while connecting with exhibitors and fellow attendees in the Expo Hall. This dedicated networking lunch offers the perfect opportunity to explore innovative solutions, spark new conversations, and refuel with regional favorites, all in one lively setting.

12:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Complimentary Headshots • Sponsored by: Treaty Oak Strategies

Moontower Hall Foyer (Level 2)

Need a fresh headshot? Award-winning photographer John Pesina (Dell, Discovery Channel, SXSW) is here to capture your best professional look. Quick 10-minute sessions available throughout the afternoon - no appointment needed. Stop by between sessions!

1:00 pm - 1:35 pm

A Health Care Affordability Conversation with Chairman Frank and Chairman Dean CLE

Waller Ballroom (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Blake Hutson**, Vice President of Public Affairs, Texas Association of Health Plans*

Speakers: ***James Frank**, Representative, District 69, Texas House of Representatives*
***Jay Dean**, Representative, District 7, Texas House of Representatives*

As Texas prepares for the 90th Legislative Session, health care affordability and relief for Texas families and employers take center stage. Join Chairman James Frank, Chairman Jay Dean, and TAHP's Blake Hutson for a discussion exploring key legislative priorities, policy expectations, and potential solutions coming out of the Capitol to address cost drivers across the state.

1:40 pm - 2:20 pm

Where Texas Medicaid Goes Next: A Conversation with HHSC Medicaid Leadership CLE

Waller Ballroom (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Jami Snyder**, MA, President and CEO, JSN Strategies, LLC*

Speakers: ***Stephanie Stephens**, Chief Medicaid and CHIP Services Officer, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*
***Valerie Mayes**, Chief Deputy, Medicaid and CHIP Services, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*
***Ryan Van Ramshorst**, MD, Chief Medical Director for Medicaid and CHIP Services, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*
***Camisha Banks**, Deputy Executive Commissioner, Managed Care, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*
***Ricky Garcia**, Deputy Executive Commissioner, Policy and Quality, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*
***James Ramirez**, Deputy Executive Commissioner, Contract Management and Procurement Strategy, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*
***Michael Lopez**, Deputy Executive Commissioner, Operations, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*

The 90th Legislative Session and the agency's Sunset review will put Texas Medicaid under a spotlight in 2027. Texas Medicaid Director Stephanie Stephens and her leadership team share where they plan to take the program, how they are approaching managed care oversight, and what they are watching in the next budget.

2:30 pm - 3:20 pm

The Price Problem: Avik Roy on Why Health Care Costs More and What Texas Can Do CLE

Waller Ballroom (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Kandice Sanaie**, Senior Regional Director, State Government Affairs, Cigna Healthcare*

Speakers: ***Avik Roy,** Co-Founder and Chairman, Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity*
***Katrina Daniel**, Former Chief Health Care Officer, Teacher Retirement System of Texas*

Americans pay more for the same care than anyone in the world. Avik Roy has spent a decade arguing the driver is prices, not patients, and that competition can bring them down. Katrina Daniel, former Chief Health Care Officer at TRS, sits down with him to ask what that means for Texas: hospital prices, drug costs, and where the state can actually make care more affordable.

3:20 pm - 4:00 pm

The Road Ahead: A Conversation with Paul Keckley on Where U.S. Health Care Is Headed

Waller Ballroom (Level 3)

Speakers: ***Paul Keckley**, Managing Editor, The Keckley Report*
***Blake Hutson**, Vice President of Public Affairs, Texas Association of Health Plans*

Paul Keckley writes one of the most widely read weekly reports on the health care industry, and he doesn't hold back on where he thinks it's going. Blake Hutson asks him what's behind rising costs, why access keeps getting harder, and what health plans should prepare for next.

4:05 pm - 4:45 pm

Leading the Texas Market: Affordability, Access, and What Comes Next

Waller Ballroom (3rd Level)

Moderator: ***Jamie Dudensing**, President and CEO, Texas Association of Health Plans*

Speakers: ***Charles Carter**, CEO, Central and South Texas, UnitedHealthcare*
***Fred Turner**, CEO, Curative*
***Jim Springfield,** President, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas*
***Lisa Wright,** President and CEO, Community Health Choice*

Texas health plan leaders are navigating rising costs, changing member expectations, and a fast-moving policy environment. This conversation will focus on what they are seeing across the market, how plans are responding to pressure around affordability and access, and what it will take to keep health care working for Texans in the years ahead.

4:45 pm - 6:15 pm

Welcome Reception in the Expo Hall

Moontower Hall (Level 2)

Close out day one with great conversation, local flavors, and connections that matter. Join us in the Expo Hall for drinks, bites, and networking with industry leaders from across Texas health care. This casual reception is the perfect way to explore exhibitor offerings, reconnect with colleagues, and enter for a chance to win exciting door prizes.

6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Diamond VIP Dinner • Private Event

The Guest House

One of the most anticipated events at Texas Covered, the Diamond VIP Dinner brings Diamond-level sponsors, TAHP board members, and C-level health plan executives together at The Guest House, a downtown Austin gathering place known for timeless cuisine, modern energy, and a setting made for great food, cocktails, and conversation.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2026

7:00 am - 7:45 am

Grab and Go Breakfast

Waller Ballroom Foyer (Level 3)

Grab breakfast in the foyer and head into a session. This quick morning meet-up offers an opportunity to connect with peers, fuel up, and prepare for the day ahead.

7:30 am - 5:00 pm

Registration Desk Open • Sponsored by: Clearlink Partners

Moontower Hall Foyer (Level 2)

Need your badge or have a question? Stop by the registration desk for assistance throughout the day.

8:00 am - 1:30 pm

Alivi Health Café • Sponsored by: Alivi Health

Moontower Hall Foyer (Level 2)

Recharge with a made-to-order hot or cold coffee featuring custom Alivi Health latte art on every drink.

8:00 am - 8:50 am

Payment Integrity in Practice: Catching Errors, Repricing, and Reducing Waste

Waller Ballroom A-B (Level 3)

Moderator: ***David Valdez**, Senior Medical Director, Molina Healthcare of Texas*

Speakers: ***Emily Ehle**, Vice President of Expert Claim Review, Zelis*
***Jake Weihrauch**, Vice President of Sales, ClaimInsight AMPS*
***Oyinade Famuyiwa**, Vice President of Payment Integrity, Alaffia Health*

Post-payment recovery is no longer enough to manage rising claim costs. This panel will show how health plans can catch billing errors and questionable charges before payment while improving out-of-network pricing and keeping more dollars directed toward care.

Stopping Health Crises Before They Happen: Operationalizing Early Intervention in Medicaid

Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Moderator: ***William Brendel**, Medical Director, Molina Healthcare of Texas*

Speakers: ***Laura Freeman**, Vice President of Public Affairs, Therapy 2000*
***Lisa Gifford**, Senior Director, Consulting, Sellers Dorsey*
***Shameet Luhar**, CEO, Vheda Health*

High-risk Medicaid members often show signs of worsening health before a costly crisis occurs. Panelists will discuss how remote monitoring and in-home services can support maternal health, chronic care, and pediatric development while helping plans measure whether early intervention is working.

From Data to Doorstep: How AI and Health Plan–Provider Partnerships Are Transforming Home-Based Care

Waller Ballroom E-F (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Eric Glenn**, Vice President, Business Development, Superior HealthPlan*

Speakers: ***Brad Bennett**, CEO-MGA Homecare & Chairman and Co-Founder Upward Health*
***Saurabha Bhatnagar**, MD, CEO and Founder, Alterion Health*
***Susan Fisk**, RN, MSN, National Director - Clinical Care Transitions, MGA Homecare*

Home-based care is becoming an increasingly important part of how health plans support members with complex needs. This session will look at how data, AI, and stronger health plan-provider partnerships can improve care delivery, expand access, support better outcomes, and make home-based care work more effectively for members, plans, and providers.

9:00 am - 9:50 am

Faster Utilization Reviews: Data, Automation, and Clinical Oversight

Waller Ballroom A-B (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Giancarlo T. Toledanes**, DO, Medical Director, Utilization Management, Texas Children's Health Plan*

Speakers: ***Chris Brandl**, Senior Director of Growth, Medical Review Institute of America*
***Howard Underwood**, Senior Research Manager, Solventum*
***Scott Howell**, MD, Medical Director, COPE Health Solutions*

Mounting regulatory pressure requires faster, defensible utilization reviews. Learn how health plans can combine AI-driven clinical data tools, external specialty peer reviews, and streamlined workflows to speed up care approvals while controlling costs.

Crushing Fraud in the Digital Age: A Conversation with CMS

CLE

Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Speakers: ***Kim Brandt**, Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer, CMS*
***Calder Lynch**, CEO and Plan President, Humana Healthy Horizons of Texas*

Fraud costs Medicare and Medicaid billions of dollars every year, and CMS is using new technology to stop it. Kim Brandt, who runs day-to-day operations at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and leads its anti-fraud office, talks with Calder Lynch about how the agency is finding fraud faster and what that means for Texas Medicaid health plans.

Bridging Clinical and Community Data for Better Care Coordination
Waller Ballroom E-F (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Heather Linton**, Divisional Senior Vice President, Texas Sales and Marketing, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas*

Speakers: ***Junaid Husain**, Chief Executive Officer, Healthconnect Texas*
***Kallol Mahata**, Chief Product Officer, Healthconnect Texas*
***Lisa Wright**, President and CEO, Community Health Choice*
***Isaac Middleton**, Chief Financial Officer, Hamilton Health Box*

This panel discussion features leaders from Healthconnect Texas, Community Health Choice, and United Way of Greater Houston as they explore how clinical and community data is being leveraged to address nonmedical drivers of health. Through real-world examples, panelists will discuss how shared data helps identify unmet social needs, improve care coordination across healthcare and community organizations, and drive better population health outcomes. Learn how cross-sector collaboration is creating a more connected, whole-person approach to care in Texas.

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Complimentary Headshots • Sponsored by: Treaty Oak Strategies
Moontower Hall Foyer (Level 2)

Last chance for a complimentary professional headshot! Acclaimed photographer John Pesina makes your LinkedIn profile picture dreams come true in just 10 minutes. No appointment needed - catch him before he wraps up at 2pm

10:00 am - 10:50 am

Lessons from Texas Health Plans on Multi-Market Growth
Waller Ballroom A-B (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Lisa Doggett**, Chief Medical Officer, Sendero Health Plans*
Speaker: ***Kevin Deutsch**, Chief Growth Officer, Softheon*
***Giuletta Rudon**, Director of Marketplace Growth, Imperial Health*

Health plans are looking beyond a single line of business to drive sustainable growth. Expanding into new markets creates new opportunities, but it also introduces operational and organizational challenges. This panel brings together Texas plan leaders to discuss what it takes to build and support a multi-market strategy in 2026 and beyond.

Program Integrity in Texas Medicaid: Insights from the Texas HHS Inspector General
CLE

Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Craig Smith**, President and CEO, Driscoll Health Plan*
Speaker: ***Raymond Charles Winter**, Inspector General, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*

Hear directly from Ray Winter, Inspector General for Texas Health and Human Services, about the state's key oversight priorities and focus areas for the year ahead. This session offers a broad look at regulatory trends and practical guidance to help health plans and providers stay aligned with state compliance goals.

Designed for Who? The Member, the Provider, the Employer, and the System That Wasn't Built for Any of Them
Waller Ballroom E-F (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Mark Chassay**, Chief Medical Officer, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas*
Speaker: ***Faisal Tai**, MD, Chief Executive Officer, PsychPlus*

Behavioral health looks different from every seat. Health plans see networks and access metrics, while members face waitlists, disconnected care, and emergency room referrals without follow-up. Providers encounter prior authorization barriers and fragmented information. Employers see absenteeism and turnover despite positive plan reports. This session unites those perspectives to show how one broken system creates different failures for each stakeholder, and why designing care around the human experience, not plan architecture, improves outcomes for members, providers, employers, and health plans.

11:00 am - 11:50 am

A Benefit Only Works If It Works: The New Engagement Playbook
Waller Ballroom A-B (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Dee Cavaness**, CEO, Texas Medicaid, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas*

Speaker: ***Jason Prigge**, Vice President and General Manager, Directed Spend, Optum Financial*
***Somer Babuerk**, MBA, Co-Founder, Veradiant*

A benefit only works when two things are true: members act on it, and the program underneath holds up when they do. Most health plans are wrestling with both. Members skip the screening, leave the script unfilled, and let supplemental dollars expire. Even when they do engage, a wrongly approved item, an out-of-network merchant, or a moment of member confusion can quietly undermine a program's value. This session looks at what actually moves members to act, including incentives, personalization, and smarter outreach, and what foundations have to be in place to deliver benefits that build trust.

Medicaid After the Reset: Federal Pressure, State Choices, and What Plans Should Watch
CLE

Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Victoria Mora**, Chief Executive Officer, Parkland Community Health Plan*

Moderator: ***Matt Salo**, Founder and CEO, Salo Health Strategies*

Speakers: ***Cheryl Roberts**, Managing Principal, Roberts Strategic Consulting Group*
***Dana Flannery**, Owner/President, DSF Consulting*

Congress passed major changes to Medicaid eligibility and financing in 2025, and states now have to decide how to carry them out. Panelists compare how Texas and other states are responding and what that means for health plans, from member retention and network adequacy to rate setting.

Preventing High-Cost Care: Finding Risk Earlier and Acting Sooner
Waller Ballroom E-F (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Karl Serrao**, MD, MBA, FAAP, FCCM, Chief Medical Officer, Driscoll Health Plan*

Speakers: ***Elina Onitskansky**, Founder and CEO, Ilant Health*
***Matthew Cavallo**, Vice President, Member Experience, RazorMetrics*
***Melissa Welch**, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Sprinter Health*

High-cost care often builds over time through rising drug spend, unmanaged chronic conditions, and missed opportunities for preventive care. This panel will look at how health plans can spot risk earlier, identify members who need more support, and use pharmacy, clinical, and in-home care strategies to prevent avoidable complications and higher costs.

12:00 pm - 1:15 pm

Lunch with Exhibitors
Moontowner Hall (Level 2)

Enjoy lunch in the expo hall while visiting exhibitor booths, connecting with peers, and taking your last chance at door prizes.

1:30 pm - 2:20 pm

Reimagining Pediatric Value-Based Care: Partnering to Improve Outcomes for Children with Special Health Care Needs
Waller Ballroom A-B (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Marian Cabanillas**, President, South Texas, UnitedHealthcare*

Speakers: ***Ruchi Kaushik**, MD, MPH, Senior Medical Director, Clinical Innovation and Research, Imagine Pediatrics*
***Jennifer Saenz**, RN, Associate Director of Case Management, UnitedHealthcare Community & State*

Imagine Pediatrics and UnitedHealthcare share data from their pediatric value-based care partnership, presented by senior leaders from both organizations. By treating caregivers as true partners and pairing that philosophy with 24/7 virtual and in-home care, the collaboration achieved a +87 Net Promoter Score, a 4.9 satisfaction rating, fewer emergency room visits and admissions, and quality targets met while lowering total cost of care. Attendees will leave with practical frameworks for building similar caregiver-centered partnerships.

No Surprises, New Problems: Abuse of the Federal Dispute Process and the Case for State Solutions

CLE Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Pati McCandless**, Shareholder, Maynard Nexsen*

Speakers: ***Rosemary Englert**, Vice President, Employer Policy and Initiatives, AHIP*
***Josh Goldberg**, Executive Director, Health Policy, Health Care Service Corporation*
***Katrina Daniel**, Former Chief Health Care Officer, Teacher Retirement System of Texas*
***Melissa Bartlett**, Senior Vice President, Health Policy, ERIC*
***Jack Hoadley**, Research Professor Emeritus, Health Policy Institute, Georgetown University*

The No Surprises Act was meant to protect patients from unexpected medical bills. Instead, the federal process for settling payment disputes between plans and out-of-network providers has been flooded with claims, driving up costs and inviting abuse. Panelists look at what's happening, what it means for health plans, and why Texas' state arbitration system may offer a more stable path forward.

Closing the Gap: How Integrated Transportation and Specialty Benefits Drive Clinical Outcomes and Plan Performance

Waller Ballroom E-F (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Dan Doucet**, Medical Director, Driscoll Health Plan*

Speaker: ***Gabriel Rojas**, Chief Strategy Officer, Alivi Health*

Missed appointments, fragmented benefits, and unchecked fraud, waste, and abuse hurt member health and plan performance. Drawing on its work with health plans and provider networks, Alivi Health shows how coordinated transportation and specialty benefits improve visit adherence, strengthen care continuity, and keep high-risk members engaged. The session also covers how strong compliance programs detect and prevent fraud, waste, and abuse while protecting the member experience.

2:30 pm - 3:20 pm

The Future of Healthcare Is Human, Empowered by AI

Waller Ballroom A-B (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Kelsey Avery**, Director, State Government Affairs, SCAN Health Plan*

Speakers: ***Rachel Spilo**, Founder and CEO, healthplans.ai*
***Joseph Ancil**, Chief AI Officer, healthplans.ai*
***Bershan Shaw**, CEO and Founder, URAWARRIOR*

AI is transforming healthcare, but success depends on leadership, purpose, and measurable outcomes. Join moderator Dr. Bershan Shaw, a two-time Stage IV cancer survivor, healthcare advocate, and founder of URAWARRIOR, with Rachel Spilo, CEO of healthplans.ai, and Joseph Ancil, Chief AI Officer, for a candid discussion on turning AI into real impact. Learn how organizations can reduce administrative burden, improve decision-making, and use AI to create a more human-centered healthcare experience.

The Program Integrity Advantage: How Stronger Internal Controls Improve Medicaid Plan Performance

CLE Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Thomas Schenk**, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Community Health Choice*

Speakers: ***Ben Hamlin**, DrPH, FAMIA, Principal, Health Management Associates*
***Margaret Tatar**, JD, Vice President, Client Solutions, Health Management Associates*

Program integrity is no longer just a compliance requirement for Medicaid health plans. Done well, it improves performance and gives plans an edge. Health Management Associates walks through how federal changes to quality measurement and data sharing, accurate encounter data, and stronger fraud, waste, and abuse detection fit together, and what plans can do now to get ahead.

Care Beyond the Clinic: Digital Tools That Support Members and Care Teams

Waller Ballroom E-F (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Mark Chassay**, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas*

Speakers: ***Kevin Swagerty**, Executive Vice President, Technology Solutions, Clearlink Partners*
***Michael Shope**, Chief Technology Officer, MDLIVE*
***Ran Ma**, CEO and Co-Founder, Siren*

New technology should make care easier to access and deliver, not harder. This panel looks at how health plans are putting tools to work by offering 24/7 virtual care, sending smart monitoring hardware directly to patients with chronic diseases, and updating daily clinical workflows so that tech supports care managers rather than getting in their way.

3:30 pm - 4:20 pm

Catching Patterns Without Breaking Trust: Benefit Integrity in Texas Medicaid Transportation

Waller Ballroom A-B (Level 3)

Speakers: ***Mark Shaffer**, Vice President of Health Plan Operations, Molina Healthcare of Texas*
***Andy Auerbach**, Chief Commercial Officer, SafeRide Health*

Medicaid ride benefits have to stop fraud, waste, and abuse without making it harder for members who genuinely need rides to get to their appointments. Molina Healthcare of Texas and SafeRide Health show how ride ratings, complaints, and grievance data shape fraud controls, and where the line sits between stopping bad actors and disrupting care. The session draws on Texas Medicaid data across STAR, STAR+PLUS, STAR Kids, and STAR Health.

Covering the Continuum: Innovations in Medicaid Mental Health Coverage CLE

Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Eric Glenn**, Vice President, Business Development, Superior HealthPlan*

Speakers: ***Blake Serpa**, Founder and CEO, BasePoint*
***Nathan Hoover**, MEd, LPC, Vice President of Behavioral Health Services, Superior HealthPlan*
***Ryan Van Ramshorst**, MD, Chief Medical Director for Medicaid and CHIP Services, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*
***Shena Ashmore**, Vice President of Payer Relations, Oceans Healthcare*
***Shara McClure**, President, McClure Health Solutions*

This panel brings together provider, health plan, and state perspectives to explore gaps in Texas Medicaid mental health coverage and opportunities to strengthen access across the continuum of care. The discussion will examine barriers to timely access, the role of intermediate levels of care, transitions between services, and opportunities for stronger collaboration among providers, health plans, and the state.

From HHSC Pressure to Performance: The Levers That Bend Total Cost of Care

Waller Ballroom E-F (Level 3)

Introduction: ***Darrin Johnson**, Chief Operating Officer, Community Health Choice*

Speakers: ***Mike Cavanagh**, Managing Director, AArete*
***Maureen Maginot**, Director, AArete*

Texas health plans face rising medical costs, growing behavioral health spending, and continued pressure on program finances. AArete walks through the practical levers plans can use to manage total cost of care and turn them into measurable results. Drawing on real-world experience, the team shows how leading plans are improving care and utilization management, network performance, payment integrity, pharmacy, and revenue.

4:30 pm - 5:20 pm

First Impressions Matter: Managing Brokers, Enrollment, and Member Communications

Waller Ballroom A-B (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Rudy Ybarra**, Vice President of Business Development, Sendero Health Plans*

Speakers: ***Brendan McLoughlin**, President, e123*
***Guilherme Fontes**, Head of Sales, Avantpage*
***Shashi Yadiki**, Chief Executive Officer, Smart Data Solutions*

Members can get lost when broker operations, enrollment intake, and member communications do not work together. This session will show how plans can connect those handoffs so enrollment moves faster, oversight is stronger, and members receive information they can understand.

Beyond Outreach: Keeping Medicaid Members Connected to Care

Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Dan Doucet**, Medical Director, Driscoll Health Plan*

Speakers: ***Eric Sternberg**, Founder and Chief Operating Officer, One Source Medical Group*
***Reva Sheehan**, Vice President, Market and Customer Strategy, mPulse*
***Adam Kustin**, Chief Growth Officer, Best Foot Forward*

Medicaid members can fall out of care when plans cannot reach them or help them take the next step. This panel will explore how better contact data and two-way outreach can reconnect members to care while making it easier to access needed supplies and support at home.

Applied AI and Data in Medicaid: Audit Readiness, Network Adequacy, and Cost Control

Waller Ballroom E-F (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Diane Perritano**, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Community First Health Plans*

Speakers: ***Patti Schnieder**, Government Programs Account Manager, Quest Analytics*
***Daverick Isaac**, Senior Vice President & Chief Financial Officer, Community First Health Plan*
***Trey Sutten**, CEO and Co-Founder, Siftwell*

Medicaid plans face growing pressure to meet network requirements, prepare for state audits, and manage costs as member needs and eligibility change. This panel will show how plans can use AI and data tools to automate network adequacy and provider access checks, strengthen audit readiness, and identify shifts in member risk and eligibility earlier.

5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Platinum VIP Reception • Private Event

Electric Shuffle

An exclusive evening for Diamond and Platinum sponsors, TAHP board members, and C-level health plan executives, this private reception at Electric Shuffle Austin offers a relaxed setting for high-impact networking. Attendees can connect with leaders from across the health care industry while enjoying craft cocktails, food, and Electric Shuffle's high-tech take on shuffleboard in the heart of downtown Austin.

Sponsored by: Arcutis Biotherapeutics, Cotiviti, Emboss Specialty, and TransPerfect

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2026

7:30 am - 8:15 am

Morning Mingle Networking Breakfast
Waller Ballroom Foyer (Level 3)

Start your final day at Texas Covered with a warm breakfast and relaxed conversation. This closing networking opportunity offers time to connect with industry peers, share insights, and wrap up the conference on a high note.

8:30 am - 9:20 am

State-Led Drug Cost Containment: Inside the Texas Pharmaceutical Initiative
CLE

Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Blake Hutson**, Vice President, Public Affairs, Texas Association of Health Plans*

Speakers: ***Mike Geeslin**, Executive Director, Texas Pharmaceutical Initiative*
***Michael D. McKinney**, M.D, Chair, Texas Pharmaceutical Initiative Board*

The Texas Pharmaceutical Initiative (TPI) was created to use the state's buying power to give state-funded health plans and programs more cost-effective access to drugs. TPI submitted a revised business plan to the Governor and Legislature on June 1, 2026. TPI leadership will walk through current operations, how state agencies are coordinating to carry out the plan, and what comes next for the Initiative.

9:20 am - 10:10 am

Medicaid CEOs on the Frontlines: Leading Through Change in Texas Medicaid

Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Jamie Dudensing**, President and CEO, Texas Association of Health Plans*

Speakers: ***Victoria Mora**, CEO, Parkland Community Health Plan*
***Stephanie Rogers**, CEO, Aetna Better Health of Texas*
***Greg Thompson**, President and CEO, Wellpoint Texas*

Texas Medicaid health plans are navigating rising costs, evolving state and federal expectations, and the complex needs of members across the state. In this candid CEO conversation, leaders from Texas Medicaid plans will share how they are responding to today's challenges, where they see opportunities to improve access and outcomes, and what it takes to lead in one of Texas' most important coverage programs.

10:20 am - 11:10 am

Health Care in Texas: A Conversation with HHSC and TDI
CLE Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Jamie Dudensing**, President and CEO, Texas Association of Health Plans*

Speakers: ***Stephanie Muth**, Executive Commissioner, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*
***Amanda Crawford**, Insurance Commissioner, Texas Department of Insurance*

Texas health care policy depends on decisions across Medicaid, insurance regulation, access, affordability, and consumer protection. This general session will cover the major issues facing Texas health care, how state agencies are responding, and what health plans should be watching in the year ahead.

11:10 am - 12:00 am

Post-Election Breakdown: What the 2026 Results Mean for Texas Health Care
CLE

Waller Ballroom C-D (Level 3)

Moderator: ***Dennis Bonnen**, Founding Partner, Second Floor Strategies, and Former Speaker, Texas House of Representatives*

Speaker: ***Brad Johnson**, Co-Founder and Reporter, Texas Bullpen*

Following the November 3rd election, former House Speaker Dennis Bonnen and political reporter Brad Johnson analyze the results. This session breaks down winning legislative campaigns, shifting leadership dynamics, and what the election outcomes mean for health care policy, state budgets, and health plans across Texas.

12:00 pm

Conference Ends