



441 G St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

November 4, 2020

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate

Subject: Health Care Costs of Firearm Injuries

Dear Senator Warren,

This letter confirms our commitment to examine the health care costs associated with firearm injuries in the United States, particularly the extent to which public payers, such as Medicaid, bear the cost of these injuries, on the basis of your letter to the Comptroller General. As discussed with your staff on October 21, 2020, we plan to complete our work and send a draft product to the agency for comment during the spring of 2021. The first enclosure sets forth the key aspects of the engagement and enclosure II lists the requestors with whom we will be coordinating our work.

We look forward to working with you and your staff on this engagement. If you have questions, you may contact me on 202-512-4931 or YocomC@gao.gov. You may also contact the Assistant Director, Susan Barnidge on 202-512-8019 or BarnidgeS@gao.gov.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carolyn L. Yocom', written in a cursive style.

Carolyn L. Yocom
Director, Health Care

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Laura Aguilar

Terms of Work

Objectives/Key Questions

In this study, we will examine the health care costs associated with firearm injuries. Our key questions are:

1. Describe initial hospital costs associated with firearm injuries in the United States and specifically the costs for Medicaid and Medicare.
2. Describe additional health care services that may be required for survivors of firearm injuries, and what is known about the costs associated with these services.

Scope and Methodology

To describe the initial hospital costs associated with firearm injuries, we will obtain, review, and analyze inpatient and emergency department data from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)'s Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP). We will produce nationally representative estimates of the prevalence of initial hospital visits for firearm injuries and the costs associated with those visits. We will examine prevalence and costs by a number of variables, including payer type, injury severity, injury site, geographic location, discharge status, demographic characteristics, and hospital characteristics.

To describe additional health care services that may be required for survivors of firearm injuries and what is known about the costs of these services, we will take several steps. We will conduct literature reviews of peer-reviewed articles and government reports on (1) the costs associated with longer-term health care services for survivors of firearm injuries and (2) longer-term service use associated with firearm injuries. We will also work with the National Academies to select 12-15 experts to participate in virtual expert panel discussions on (1) the types and amounts of longer-term health care services that may be required for survivors of different firearm injuries and factors affecting the level of care provided and (2) the state of existing research on longer-term health care costs for firearm injuries, including any limitations or data gaps, as well as a more general discussion of what is known about these costs.

The work will be done in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Reporting on Status of Our Work

We will periodically discuss the status of our work with you and/or your staff.

Date to Agency(s) for Comments

After GAO has developed the product's preliminary message, we will provide a specific date when a draft of the product will be sent to the Department of Health and Human Services for comment. Please notify the engagement team if you wish to receive an informational copy of the report when it is sent to the agency for comment.

Terms of Work

Product Issuance Date

Once GAO has received agency(s) comments, we will set a product issuance date and notify you of this date.

List of Requesters

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
House of Representatives
(Staff Member: Miles Lichtman)

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
(Staff Member: Laura Aguilar)

The Honorable Robin Kelly
House of Representatives
(Staff Member: Charles Bolden)