

Department of Health and Human Services

TIMELINE

1798

Passage of an act for the relief of sick and disabled seamen, establishing a federal network of hospitals for the care of merchant seamen, forerunner of today's U.S. Public Health Service.

1887

The federal government opens a one-room laboratory on Staten Island for research on disease, setting the stage for later creation of the National Institutes of Health.

1912

President Theodore Roosevelt's first White House Conference urges creation of the Children's Bureau to combat exploitation of children.

1935

Passage of the Social Security Act.

1946

The Cabinet-level Department of Health, Education and Welfare is created under President Eisenhower, officially coming into existence April 11, 1953. In 1979, the Department of Education Organization Act is signed into law, providing for a separate Department of Education. HEW became the Department of Health and Human Services, officially arriving on May 4, 1980.

1955

Licensing of the Salk polio vaccine.

1961

First White House Conference on Aging.

1962

Passage of the Migrant Health Act, providing support for clinics serving agricultural workers.

1964

Release of the first Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health.

1965

Creation of the Medicare and Medicaid programs, making comprehensive health care available to millions of Americans.

The Older Americans Act creates the nutritional and social programs administered by HHS' Administration on Aging.

Head Start program is created.

1966

International Smallpox Eradication program established; the worldwide eradication of smallpox is accomplished in 1977.

1980

Federal funding provided to states for foster care and adoption assistance.

1981

Identification of AIDS. In 1984, the HIV



virus was identified by PHS and French scientists. In 1985, a blood test to detect HIV was licensed.

1984

National Organ Transplantation Act signed into law.

1988

Creation of the JOBS program and federal support for child care. Passage of the McKinney Act to provide health care to the homeless.

1990

Human Genome Project established. Passage of the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act, authorizing the food label. The Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resource Emergency (CARE) Act began providing support for people with AIDS.

1993

The Vaccines for Children Program is established, providing free immunizations to all children in low-income families.

1996

Enactment of welfare reform under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act.

Enactment of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

1997

Creation of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), enabling states to extend health coverage to more uninsured children.

1999

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 is signed, making it possible for millions of Americans with disabilities to join the workforce without fear of losing their Medicaid and Medicare coverage.

Initiative on combatting bioterrorism is launched.

2000

Publication of human genome sequencing.

2001

HHS responds to the nation's first bioterrorism attack — delivery of anthrax through the mail.

2002

Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness created to coordinate efforts against bioterrorism and other emergency health threats.

2003

Enactment of the Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003, the most significant expansion of Medicare since its enactment, including a prescription drug benefit.

Source: www.hhs.gov/about/hhshist.html