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New Analysis Finds CMS Organ Procurement Metrics May Disproportionately Impact Minority Communities Ahead of 2026 Decertifications

Waltham, MA — [February 5, 2026] — [New England Donor Services](#) (NEDS) today highlighted a newly published peer-reviewed article in *Transplantation* that warns that the upcoming Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) decertification actions for Organ Procurement Organizations (OPOs) may disproportionately impact racially and ethnically diverse communities, potentially exacerbating longstanding inequities in organ donation and transplantation.

The article entitled “[Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Performance Metrics and the Disproportionate Impact of Decertifying Organ Procurement Organizations on Minority Populations](#),” was authored by James R. Rodrigue, PhD of New England Donor Services and Harvard Medical School, as well as Sean Fitzpatrick, MPA and Brandon McKown, MBA of New England Donor Services.

Using CMS’s own data sources and methodology, the research team projected 2026 OPO tier assignments based on 2024 performance. The findings show a strong association between CMS’s tier rankings and the racial and ethnic composition of the populations served:

- OPOs projected for **Tier 3 (automatic decertification)** serve the **highest proportions of non-White residents**, with 57 percent of their donation service areas made up of minority populations—compared with just 31.9 percent in Tier 1.
- Statistically, OPOs serving larger shares of **Black, Hispanic, and other minority** populations are significantly more likely to fall into lower CMS tiers.
- In 2024 alone, OPOs projected to be in Tier 3 and decertified supported **more than 1,600 hospitals**, facilitated **over 340,000 hospital referrals**, and enabled the transplantation of **11,181 organs from 4,099 donors** – demonstrating the scale of potential disruption if these OPOs are decertified.

According to the article, CMS’s unadjusted performance measures fail to account for structural and social determinants – including historical mistrust, lower donor registration rates, and differential authorization patterns – that shape organ donation in diverse communities. Without making the necessary adjustment for these factors, the authors argue, OPOs serving multicultural populations may be inaccurately labeled as underperforming.

“Accountability and fairness are not competing goals; they are codependent,” the authors write. “A balanced policy framework that recognizes contextual complexity while upholding rigorous performance standards is essential to ensuring that reforms designed to improve the system do not, in turn, deepen the inequities they seek to overcome.”

The study also highlights significant risks associated with OPO decertification, including:

- Disruption of hospital agreements and care coordination;
- Loss of skilled, culturally concordant staff;
- Erosion of community trust built over decades;
- Potential decreases in donor registration and authorization; and
- Reduced stability in regions with high transplant need.

The authors urge CMS to adopt more equitable performance standards that acknowledge demographic realities, prevent structural bias, and protect donation capacity in communities of color.

The paper was presented at the Association of Multicultural Affairs in Transplantation’s annual meeting in September 2025 and is now available through *Transplantation*.

About New England Donor Services (NEDS)

New England Donor Services is a leading nonprofit organization that coordinates organ and tissue donation in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, the eastern counties of Vermont, and Bermuda. Co-founded in 1968 by Nobel Laureate Dr. Joseph Murray, who performed the world’s first successful organ transplant, today NEDS works with thousands of donors and donor families who have generously made the decision to give the gift of life. The organization’s highly skilled staff medically screen referrals for potential donations from more than 200 hospitals across the region and lead all donor authorization discussions with families. NEDS also allocates organs according to the national transplant waiting list and coordinates their transport to ensure the right organs get to the right patients at the right time. Learn more at <https://neds.org/> or follow us on [LinkedIn](#) or on X at [@NEDonorServices](#).

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