

# How AI Is Transforming HHS

Illinois leads the way in using AI to build healthier, more equitable communities.



**A**I is rapidly becoming one of the most powerful tools for state and local governments as they seek to improve health outcomes, reduce inequities and serve their communities more effectively. From automating eligibility reviews to expanding access for underserved families, AI offers a chance to reimagine what health and human services (HHS) can do.

For state agencies, these tools can help realize the core mission of HHS: providing care and opportunity to those who need it most. Few states illustrate this better than Illinois.

**“It’s a win both for providers and the community they serve.”**

**John Cecala**, AI Cloud Executive for Government and Higher Education, Google



## AI’s Expanding Role in State HHS

State governments are beginning to see AI as a foundational technology for modernizing HHS. Predictive analytics can identify individuals at high risk for chronic illness or adverse outcomes, allowing earlier interventions. Chatbots and virtual assistants can guide residents through scheduling, benefits enrollment and follow-up reminders — available 24/7, in multiple languages and accessible from mobile devices.

Machine learning models can analyze hospital data, wearable device telemetry and social determinants of health to identify emerging risks — from maternal health disparities to chronic disease clusters. Insights like these help HHS leaders direct funding to programs that prevent illness before it begins.

“Every state spends the largest percentage of its budget on health and human services — in some cases, 60%,” says John Cecala, AI cloud executive for government and higher education at Google. “When you have an opportunity to improve services, deliver better care and lower costs because you’re being more proactive with your intervention, it’s a win both for providers and the population they serve.”

## Illinois as a Model for Modernization

Illinois has become an early proving ground for using AI to tackle some of government’s most complex healthcare and social service challenges. The state’s Healthy Baby initiative, developed in partnership with the startup Drive Health and Google Public Sector, demonstrates the state’s innovative approach.

The pilot project focuses on expectant mothers on Medicaid who live in underserved or rural communities — populations often excluded from consistent care. Participants receive a Google Pixel smartphone and a Fitbit device connected to an AI-driven virtual nurse that checks in regularly, monitors vitals and offers guidance on following care plans.

Programs like this demonstrate the larger potential of AI in state health systems. “You’re reaching a population that has been excluded or underserved,” Cecala says. “These expectant mothers are now getting immediate access to structured guidance and support from an AI assistant, ‘Avery,’ which helps them navigate their care plan and alerts their care team when something needs attention. You can be proactive instead of reactive.”

From a government perspective, that shift pays dividends. “Healthier mothers and healthier babies means fewer hospital visits,” Cecala says. “As a state, that means you’re reducing reimbursement costs, and you’re able to invest those funds in other ways.”

While Healthy Baby is only a pilot, it highlights the scalable potential of AI in supporting vulnerable populations, from expectant mothers to aging residents to individuals managing chronic conditions.

“Responsible AI has the power to be a real force multiplier in access to care,” says Leeza Constantoulakis, chief nursing officer at Drive Health. “If our AI technology can help even one more mother be informed and connected during her prenatal journey, it is a win for all.”

Cecala envisions similar models being applied to diabetes, cardiac issues or post-operative care: “You can put this AI assistant into the hands of people who may not have access to a doctor or hospital. It gives them personalized support to navigate their care plan and prompts them when it may be time to reach out to their clinical team.”

## Connecting Underserved Residents

The broader story in Illinois is that AI can help HHS leaders bridge structural gaps that have persisted for decades.

AI-driven initiatives can reach underserved populations more effectively. Virtual assistants can monitor progress, flag risk factors and connect patients to services in real time — functions that not only save lives but also reduce costs.

Beyond healthcare delivery, AI has a growing impact on human services programs. Across the nation, state HHS agencies are under new pressure to reduce eligibility and payment errors in programs like SNAP and Medicaid — or face significant financial penalties. The federal government’s updated mandates now require states to bring SNAP error rates below 6% or risk millions in fines and cost-sharing obligations, a major shift that puts more fiscal responsibility on state budgets. These errors are rarely fraud. Instead, they stem from human mistakes — data entry issues, inconsistent documentation or misapplied rules.

By deploying AI-powered tools for eligibility determination, states like Illinois can dramatically reduce these costly mistakes while improving access for residents.

These solutions show how AI can make the “no wrong door” approach to service delivery — long an aspiration for HHS leaders — a reality. “In Illinois, there are projects using agentic AI to navigate residents to the right information,” Cecala says. “Instead of siloed care, you’re going to have a layer of an AI intake agent that helps you get the right information. The smart governments are the ones who will implement it and make it useful.”

## Reducing Workforce Toil

For many state health leaders, staff shortages and administrative overload remain chronic challenges. AI can provide meaningful relief by taking over time-consuming documentation and data entry tasks.

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Leeza Constantoulakis,  
Chief Nursing Officer,  
Drive Health



For example, AI technologies can automate repetitive documentation, summarize patient histories and flag anomalies in electronic health records — allowing nurses and physicians to focus on patient care instead of paperwork.

“We’re seeing technology go into a whole new direction with treating our patients and helping us take tasks off the providers’ hands,” Constantoulakis says.

Generative AI can also help train new clinicians and case-workers by simulating patient interactions, summarizing regulations and customizing training. Agentic AI has the potential to assist with post-visit follow-up, case management and compliance.

For public agencies with limited resources, these efficiencies translate into more time for high-impact work — and better outcomes for residents.

## Building Smarter Systems

Illinois’ efforts reflect a national trend: using AI to make health and human services not only more efficient but also more equitable. These systems also give states the ability to plan more strategically.

Illinois’ experience demonstrates how AI can enhance the reach, responsiveness and effectiveness of public health and human services. Programs like Healthy Baby serve as vitally important prototypes for a new era of state-led healthcare innovation.

By embracing AI responsibly and strategically, HHS leaders can strengthen trust, reduce inequities and ensure that every resident — no matter where they live — has access to the care and support they need.

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