



REGULATORY PULSE

LEGAL AND REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECTORS

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International Health Regulations (2005) Implementation in Nigeria

Subnational Legal Assessment Tool for Public Health Laws

1. INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS AMENDMENTS ENTER INTO FORCE

On 19 September 2025, the amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005), approved by the World Health Assembly on 1 June 2024, entered into effect. The amendments strengthen global health security by enhancing pandemic preparedness and response, promoting equity and solidarity, and establishing new mechanisms such as national IHR authorities and a Coordinating Financial Mechanism to ensure equitable access to medical countermeasures.

The development has immediate implications for Nigeria. Regulatory authorities must strengthen disease surveillance and reporting systems, update national frameworks to reflect new obligations, and ensure institutional readiness to comply with the revised IHR provisions.

2. NATIONAL TRADITIONAL MEDICINE POLICY AND ETHICS CODE

The Federal Government has launched the Strategic Plan of Action for the Implementation of the National Traditional Medicine Policy, together with the Code of Ethics and Practice for Traditional Medicine Practitioners. The framework is designed to strengthen the regulation and integration of traditional medicine into the national health system. The Strategic Plan outlines measures for documenting, researching, and standardising traditional remedies, while the Code of Ethics establishes professional conduct standards for practitioners.

The new framework has implications for traditional medicine practitioners and producers, who must now comply with approved protocols, licensing requirements, and quality standards.

3. NDPC'S GENERAL APPLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION DIRECTIVE (GAID)

As the Nigeria Data Protection Commission's (NDPC) General Application and Implementation Directive (GAID) takes effect on September 19, 2025, the country's health sector is now subject to a higher standard of accountability in safeguarding sensitive patient data. Replacing the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) of 2019, the GAID introduces stricter compliance requirements for healthcare providers and organizations that process personal health information. These include digital health record platforms, telemedicine providers, health information exchanges, hospitals, and other entities within the healthcare ecosystem.

The new directive has implications for healthcare providers, who must implement robust security measures, obtain explicit patient consent, appoint Data Protection Officers (DPOs), and conduct regular staff training to mitigate data breach risks.

4. FG INAUGURATES COMMITTEE TO ENFORCE ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION GUIDELINES

In September 2025, the Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, inaugurated the National Tertiary Health Institutions Standards Committee (NTHISC) to enforce the 2025 Guidelines on Organ and Tissue Transplantation. The framework sets national standards for donor and recipient safety, prohibits organ trafficking, mandates informed consent, and is set to introduce a National Organ Donation and Transplantation Registry to strengthen monitoring and accountability.

The development carries compliance implications for health institutions, transplant practitioners, regulators, and ethics committees. Stakeholders will be required to register operations, implement uniform protocols, integrate services into the NHIA framework, and comply with stricter oversight and reporting obligations.

5. NATIONAL LEAD POISONING ELIMINATION FRAMEWORK

In September 2025, the Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, inaugurated a National Inter-Agency Working Group on Lead Poisoning Elimination and unveiled a five-year strategic plan to eradicate lead exposure across Nigeria. The initiative establishes a multi-sectoral governance framework involving ministries such as Environment, Solid Minerals, Agriculture, and Water Resources, as well as regulatory agencies including NESREA, NAFDAC, and SON, to harmonise policy, surveillance, and intervention.

The development has implications for healthcare providers, alongside environmental services and infrastructure stakeholders. Hospitals and laboratories will be required to adopt stricter monitoring, reporting, and remediation protocols.

6. FG INTRODUCES DIGITAL INVENTORY MODEL FOR ESSENTIAL MEDICINES

The Federal Government has introduced a digital inventory consignment model for essential medicines in federal tertiary hospitals to combat drug stockouts and enhance access. This initiative aligns with the National Strategy for Supply Chain Management of Essential Drugs. It is implemented by the Department of Hospital Services in partnership with the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria and NAFDAC. The model aims to improve supply chain management, increase transparency, reduce waste and theft, and enhance service delivery and collaboration among stakeholders.

The new framework has implications for healthcare providers, who must adapt their procurement and inventory systems to comply with the digital inventory requirements.

7. STRENGTHENING EMERGENCY CARE IN NIGERIA

The Healthcare Federation of Nigeria (HFN) and the Health Emergency Initiative (HEI) have launched the Medical Intervention Trust Fund (MITF) to address critical gaps in the country's emergency medical response system. The fund is expected to close gaps such as poor post-crash response, high infant and maternal deaths, low insurance coverage, and the inability of many patients to pay for urgent treatment. The initiative is designed to improve access to life-saving interventions and strengthen Nigeria's emergency health infrastructure.

The development has implications for hospitals, insurers, and emergency service providers, who will be expected to align with new funding, infrastructure, and capacity-building measures. Stakeholders must also prepare for greater collaboration with private sector actors, development partners, and government institutions to ensure compliance and sustainability of emergency medical services.

8. ATTEMPTED SUICIDE TO BE DECRIMINALISED BY DECEMBER

The Federal Government has announced that attempted suicide will be decriminalised by December 2025. The reform will repeal Section 327 of the Criminal Code Act and Section 231 of the Penal Code, which currently criminalise attempted suicide. The change will reframe suicide from a criminal offence to a public health and mental health issue.

This development is in line with the work of the National Taskforce on the Decriminalisation of Attempted Suicide, inaugurated in 2024. The decriminalisation will have implications for states, which must harmonise their laws and strengthen mental health infrastructure. Healthcare providers and policymakers will need to prioritise early intervention, counselling, and access to psychiatric services in line with the reform.

This content is intended only to provide general information on the subject matter. It should not be construed as legal advice. You should seek specialist legal advice about your specific circumstances.

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