



Update Calls next week. Is it time to act on long-term care financing reform? Is today's nursing home model relevant for most consumers? And more on vaccine hesitancy. On **Monday, May 3**, the Update Call will feature two speakers. **Bob Kramer**, Special Advisor and former CEO from the National Investment Center for Seniors Housing & Care will talk about his [Health Affairs blog post](#) on reimagining nursing homes for the future and long-term care financing reform. Also on Monday, Jesse Zemmerer from Community Catalyst will discuss a new grant opportunity, the Vaccine Education and Equity Project and how LeadingAge members can apply to get grants to help advance education campaigns around COVID-19 and other vaccines. On **Wednesday, May 5**, we will speak with Vish Viswanath, a health communications expert from Harvard University whose recent work is focused on how to get past the moveable middle of vaccine acceptance and get those harder to convince staff and residents. We're finalizing plans for Thursday's call. If you haven't registered for Update Calls and wish to, you can do so [here](#).

Bicameral Bipartisan Telehealth Bill "CONNECT for Health Act" Introduced. U.S. Senators Brian Schatz (D-Hawai'i), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), John Thune (R-S.D.), Mark Warner (D-Va.) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) led a bipartisan group of 50 senators in reintroducing the Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies (CONNECT) for Health Act of 2021. Companion legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives by U.S. Representatives Mike Thompson (D-Calif.), Peter Welch (D-Vt.), David Schweikert (R-Ariz.), Bill Johnson (R-Ohio), and Doris Matsui (D-Calif.). The CONNECT for Health Act has the support of more than 150 stakeholder organizations including LeadingAge and LeadingAge CAST. The CONNECT for Health Act was first introduced in 2016 and is considered the most comprehensive legislation on telehealth in Congress. Since 2016, several provisions of the bill were enacted into law or adopted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, including provisions to remove restrictions on telehealth services for mental health, stroke care, and home dialysis. The updated version of the CONNECT for Health Act builds on that progress and includes new and revised provisions that will help more people access telehealth services. A summary of the bill and the full list of endorsing organizations are [available here](#). The legislation makes the following pertinent changes for home health and hospice providers:

- Permanently remove all geographic restrictions on telehealth services and expand originating sites to include the home and other sites;
- Allows for hospices to continue to provide the face to face recertification via telehealth after the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency. It also requires a GAO report evaluating the appropriateness of patients recertified through the use of hospice;
- Require a study to learn more about how telehealth has been used during the current COVID-19 pandemic;
- Provide the Secretary of Health and Human Services with the permanent authority to waive telehealth restrictions in the Medicare statute if the proposed waivers do not reduce quality and meet certain broad conditions; and
- Allow for the waiver of telehealth restrictions during public health emergencies.

Don't throw away extra BinaxNOW cards with an imminent expiration date! We spoke to Abbott and they filed with the FDA to have a longer expiration period for all lots of tests in the field. They expect the FDA will approve a 12 month expiration date for BinaxCards. The cards that are being sent from HHS have an expiration date on the boxes of 6 months so some of the tests you received in the fall may be reaching that date but don't throw them out! We will provide an update as soon as we hear from Abbott.

LeadingAge Collaborates with the Home Care Association of America on an Article Highlighting the IMAGINE Initiative. LeadingAge contributed information about our [IMAGINE Initiative](#) for the Home Care Association of America's (HCAOA) members Spring 2021 magazine, *The Voice*. The article "IMAGINE Initiative: Will Allow Foreign-Born Workers to Meet the Growing Care Needs of a Rapidly Aging America" provides an overview of the IMAGINE policy recommendations to Congress, efforts to influence immigration bills with the Biden Administration and how HCAOA members can help this initiative. You can access the article [here](#)

American Families Plan. The White House released the "third leg" of the Build Back Better three-legged stool – the [American Families Plan](#) – this morning and the President will speak about it tonight. (The American Rescue Plan and the American Jobs Plan were the prior two components.) Many of the provisions in the new plan would support members of the aging services workforce. For instance, the plan would offer:

- Two free years of community college for anyone.
- Subsidized tuition for students from families earning less than \$125,000 for four year Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and other minority-serving institutions.
- Support for free universal pre-school for all three and four year olds.
- Affordable child care on a sliding scale.
- Support for caregiving through a 12 week paid family and medical leave benefit.

These provisions and others in the plan represent part of an investment in the aging services infrastructure by supporting the people who provide care.

CDC to Host Call on Older Adult Vaccinations. CDC's Vaccine Taskforce is hosting the second in a series of sessions about COVID-19 vaccination of older adults. The call will take place on May 5, from 1-2:30pm ET. The session will provide updated information about older adult vaccination rates and what older adults can do when they are vaccinated; the session will also include a discussion about the strategies to overcome vaccine hesitancy and provide vaccine access for older persons in rural areas and among HUD-assisted residents. Register [here](#), and send advance questions for the CDC session related to home or community based care to Mollie at mgurian@leadingage.org

Biden Issues Executive Order on Increasing the Minimum Wage for Federal Contractors. On Tuesday, President Biden signed an [Executive Order](#) to increase the federal minimum wage for federal contractors. This is similar to what the Obama administration did back in 2014, when a DOL final rule increased the minimum wage for federal contractors to \$10.10/hr. It is now \$10.95/hr based on indexed increases. This would apply to new federal contracts starting after March 30, 2022. The Executive Order requires new regulations on this increase be issued by November 24, 2021. It would apply to those nursing homes and other provider types that specifically contract with the VA for the care of residents who are veterans and get reimbursed through the VA system. This does **not** apply to

providers who just take Medicare and Medicaid – they are not federal contractors under this order, but rather just get reimbursement under these programs. The new regulations will determine if there are any changes to the existing way to calculate the wages for direct care workers or to the current exemptions for certain staff that provide services "in connection with" the contract to provide services for the veterans. We will continue to follow and advise members once the regulations are published for comment or more information is available.

Summer Enrichment Program Mentors Needed. LeadingAge is recruiting mentors for the [Summer Enrichment Program](#) (SEP, an internship in the field of aging designed to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion). We would like to pair interns with a mentor who brings diversity to the field of aging. The mentor can be from any LeadingAge organization across the country. The SEP starts in June with approximately 30 interns. This will be an incredible opportunity to mentor a future leader and to share your passion for the field of aging. If you are willing to be a mentor, please [email Christy Kramer](#).

Virtual 2021 Collaborative Care & Health IT Innovations Summit. In June, LeadingAge hosts the premier conference for information technology leaders in long-term and post-acute care settings. The Summit will convene industry experts who will share lessons from the pandemic, explore what's on the horizon for technology and collaborative care, discuss the next generation of alternative payment models, and much, much more. Joe Coughlin (MIT AgeLab), Dr. Mark McClellan (Duke University), Chris Ritter (CMMI), and Peter Kress (Acts) are among confirmed keynotes. [Learn more and register today](#).