

Medicaid HCBS and PACE Weekly: Recap of Leading Age Updates

July 22, 2022

LeadingAge COVID Update Calls. How are older people doing at this point in the pandemic? How can providers support their best quality of life? On Monday, July 25 at 3:30 PM ET, we are going to look into the trends and impact of COVID-19 on the cognitive, physical and psycho-social health and well-being of older adults. Dr. Catherine O'Brien from the Mather Institute is going to unpack the results of the Age Well study and show how we can help to improve the quality of life for older adults in aging service settings. If you haven't registered for LeadingAge Update Calls, [you can do so here](#). You can also find previous call recordings [here](#). Note that to access recordings of the calls you need a LeadingAge password. Any staff member of any LeadingAge member organization can set up a password to access previous calls and other "members only" content.

CMS releases the first ever HCBS quality measure set to promote consistent quality measurement within and across state Medicaid HCBS programs. On July 21, CMS issued a [letter to State Medicaid Directors](#) on the recommended HCBS Quality Measure Set that is intended to support states with improving the quality and outcomes of HCBS, and can play an important role in states' efforts to promote equity in their HCBS programs. The measure set, which is voluntary at this time, extensively leverages existing beneficiary surveys used by states, and is designed to be used with one or more experience of care surveys to assess the experience of care of each of the major population groups included in the HCBS program (e.g., older adults, adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, adults with physical disabilities, adults with serious mental illness). This LeadingAge [article](#) describes the three areas of focus, and how workforce implications and funding must be considered in achieving HCBS quality care.

CMS and Medicaid leaders have been weighing in on Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) opportunities during these historic times of federal investment and are eager to leverage the current spotlight on HCBS to drive improvements in care and delivery, now and in the future. This LeadingAge [article](#) provides insights for members on why the time continues to be now to work together to bolster HCBS systems and funding that accomplishes long-term solutions for older adults and their caregivers.

21st Century CURES Act does NOT apply to long-term care and post-acute care providers. Some LeadingAge members have asked whether the 21st Century CURES Act requirement that health care providers make electronic health records accessible to residents/responsible parties applies to long-term care and post-acute care providers. **IT DOES NOT.** Majd Alwan reports that some vendors are encouraging LTPAC providers to prepare, but it is NOT currently required. Majd shared this [FAQ](#) and link to a LeadingAge Hub [webinar](#) in which he talks with representatives of CMS and the HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT. Both the FAQ and the HHS representatives explain that CURES does not apply to LTPAC providers.

CMS releases the Beneficiary Protections and Medicaid Drug Coverage, Particularly Under Value Based Purchasing (VBP) Arrangements CMCS Informational Bulletin. This bulletin reminds states and stakeholders of the existing federal beneficiary protections in statute and regulation that must be

followed when providing Medicaid pharmacy benefits, especially when states agree to enter into novel payment arrangements with drug manufacturers such as value-based purchasing arrangements. Learn more [here](#).

Meeting with VA on Home Health and Adult Day Services. LeadingAge had a discussion with the VA's Central Office Division of Purchased Long Term Services and Supports to discuss expanding collaboration between our members and VA, including the impact of the newly passed Elizabeth Dole Act on respite services for veterans and their families, restructuring of reauthorizations processes for home health and home care, and incentives for veterans to utilize adult day. We look forward to continuing the conversation, as VA noted their interest in ongoing sessions to talk about enhancing our partnership in order to serve more vets aging in the community.

A Day of Action on the Aging Services Workforce. Get Ready for the July 27 Aging Services Workforce Day of Action! On Wednesday, July 27, join fellow LeadingAge members around the country for a virtual Aging Services Workforce Day of Action, part of the Aging Services Workforce Now campaign, to demand Congress take immediate action to address the workforce crisis in aging services.

Get ready for July 27th when we will ask LeadingAge members to:

- Contact your members of Congress and tell them to take action on legislation that will strengthen the workforce and support the aging services infrastructure.
- Share your workforce story with your members of Congress: what staffing challenges do you have and how are they impacting your ability to meet the needs of older Americans.
- Urge others, including residents and staff, to add join us on the July 27 Aging Services Day of Action.

Learn more about LeadingAge's [Aging Services Workforce Now](#) campaign!

Congressional Virtual Briefing: Addressing the Workforce Crisis in Aging Services. To coincide with the new coordinated advocacy campaign, "Aging Services Workforce Now," LeadingAge held a Congressional Briefing on July 20, 2022, for Senate and House congressional staff. The briefing was an opportunity to highlight the policy opportunities that would meet the needs of older Americans in the face of persistent and severe workforce shortage for aging services providers.

Katie Smith Sloan served as moderator for the briefing. A few LeadingAge providers were also invited to address their workforce challenges, and House and Senate leaders who focus on addressing workforce challenges across the long-term care continuum. Representative Ann Kuster (D-NH), Co-Chair, of the newly formed bipartisan House 21st Century Long-Term Care Caucus, attended the briefing and shared opening remarks. The Congresswoman also reiterated the caucus' commitment to proactively studying ways to create a better system for older Americans, including the issues that would strengthen the existing workforce challenges facing the long-term care sector.

The LeadingAge panelist included: Mike King, LeadingAge Board Chair and President & CEO of Volunteers of America, Alexandria, VA; Tom Syverson, Director of Government Relations, The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society / Sanford Health, Sioux Falls, SD; Jeff Farber, President & CEO, The New Jewish Home, New York, NY; and, Rob Lahammer, Vice President of Engagement and Advocacy, Presbyterian Homes and Services, Roseville, MN.

Katie also highlighted the top findings in the LeadingAge Workforce snap poll, conducted in June 2022, where respondents reported that their workforce difficulties remain; the pipeline for potential workers has not gotten stronger as people leave the field; and nursing positions are especially difficult to fill. Additionally, LeadingAge provided an overview of the campaign’s “[full policy asks](#)” that we are asking Congress and the Administration to take immediate action, which includes:

- Pay aging professionals a living wage.
- Offer incentives to retain and attract qualified staff.
- Expand training and advancement opportunities.
- Build dependable international pipelines of trained caregivers.
- Enact meaningful, equitable long-term care financing.

LeadingAge Members Serving Lower Income Older Adults: There is an AARP [funding opportunity](#) to support older adults applying for the [Medicare Savings Program](#), a program from states to help eligible older adults pay for Medicare Part A and B premiums. AARP is looking for community-based organizations, safety-net health care providers and clinics, and social services agencies who have experience serving older adults living with low income, assisting older adults with accessing public benefits, and a record of outreach to underserved populations. The grants seek to educate, engage, and enroll more eligible older adults with low income in Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs) and to learn about barriers to awareness, application, and the recertification process. The grant awards are \$50,000-\$150,000 and applicants must be from one of 22 focus states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The application deadline is August 3, 2022.

The Economic Costs of Caregiving: The July 20th *Generations* [article](#) asserts that there must be increased access to home- and community-based supports for all who need care and care workers must be paid a thriving wage, [which would help to address the worker shortage in the field](#). The author also states that when the country ensures caregivers receive the support they deserve, generational poverty will be disrupted by allowing all women, particularly women of color, “to participate in the workforce, stabilizing their families, their communities and, by extension, this nation.”

Roadmap for Investment in Dementia Care: In the next eight years, the number of people living with dementia worldwide could reach 78 million, according to the World Health Organization. On average, people with dementia live five to 10 years after diagnosis and they will need medical, neuropsychological, and social services throughout their care journey. In much of the world, people living with dementia and their caregivers do not receive high-quality, coordinated, comprehensive care. The Milken Institute and Alzheimer’s Society have released a [roadmap](#) to address this urgent need.

White House Summit on Vaccines. The White House announced plans for a Summit on the Future of COVID-19 Vaccines via livestream on Tuesday, July 26 from 11:00 AM – 3:15 PM ET. The program will outline a path towards innovative, next generation COVID-19 vaccines and feature leaders who are on the cutting edge of these discoveries. Interested individuals can [RSVP here](#). The event agenda will be shared closer to the date of the event. Many LeadingAge members have asked about the non-mRNA vaccines and about vaccines that might be more effective in fighting Omicron and its variants. It is possible that these questions will be addressed at this summit.

Long COVID affects nearly 1 in 4 cases, with symptoms that may last for months. A new USC study finds that 23% of people infected with COVID will become “long haulers,” and identifies predictors of who is likely to develop the sometimes-debilitating symptoms that can last for months. The research, which appears in [Scientific Reports](#), is unique because it accounts for preexisting symptoms such as fatigue and sneezing that are common to other conditions and may be mistaken for COVID symptoms. An interdisciplinary study from the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology also reveals predictors of [who might get long COVID](#). [Note: CDC has previously reported that long COVID affects 1 in 5 cases.]

COVID-19 boosters offer good protection against early Omicron subvariants: First and second COVID-19 vaccine booster doses conferred substantial protection against emergency department/urgent care (ED/UC) visits and hospitalizations caused by infections with the Omicron subvariants BA.1, BA.2, and BA.2.12.1, finds a CDC study of adults in 10 US states published late last week in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Analysis of the study by CIDRAP is found [here](#).

House Hearing on Long COVID. The House Select Committee on the Coronavirus Crisis will host a [hearing on long COVID](#) on July 19 at 10:00 AM ET. The hearing can be viewed on the Committee’s [live stream](#). Long COVID has affected millions of Americans, sometimes causing serious, long-term health issues that have forced people out of the workforce and interfered with daily life. A recent federal government estimate indicates that [nearly 1 in 5 adults](#) who have previously been infected with the coronavirus are still experiencing symptoms of Long COVID, such as fatigue, shortness of breath, cognitive dysfunction (e.g., “brain fog”), and chronic pain, among others. Approximately [1 million Americans](#) may have been pushed out of work because of the condition, causing them to lose wages and, in some cases, employer-based health insurance. Many Americans face difficulties in receiving a diagnosis and treatment due to a lack of awareness and barriers to care. The hearing can be viewed on the Committee’s [live stream](#).