



## Nursing Home Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

January 29, 2021

**LeadingAge Coronavirus Call, Monday, February 1, 3:30 PM Eastern time. Another vaccine hesitancy resource.** Be sure to join us as we return to our normal schedule next week of Monday, Wednesday, Thursday calls. On Monday, February 1st we will be joined by Dr. Alice Bonner from the Institute of Healthcare Improvement, who will talk about some great resources that have been created for vaccine distribution and will also provide some key updates on what is being learned at Project ECHO sessions as the discuss COVID-19. If you haven't signed up for our calls, you can [register here](#).

**Letter to White House COVID-19 Task Force and CDC on LPC IL Resident Inclusion in Pharmacy Partnership.** Today, LeadingAge and VNAA sent a [letter](#) to Dr. Rachele Walensky (New Director of CDC,) Jeffrey Zients (White House COVID Task Force Coordinator,) and Dr. Bechara Choucair (White House COVID 19 Task Force Vaccine Coordinator) regarding the issue of Independent Living residents of LPCs being excluded from the Pharmacy Partnership clinics in some states. We went on-record to explicitly ask that CDC formally allow the inclusion of IL residents living in LPCs in the PP clinics, and that partner pharmacies be required to comply with this inclusion if their state has agreed to the CDC recommendation. Many of the key talking points for IL inclusion were written to echo the numerous concerns and frustrations that we have heard from LPC residents, members and you, our State Partners.

**Updated LeadingAge FAQs on Vaccines.** We have updated the LeadingAge FAQs [LeadingAge FAQs](#) with the most current information on masking, the new variants appearing in the US, vaccinations and TB testing, as well as some new and updated CDC and LeadingAge resources. The new CDC and LeadingAge resources include:

[CDC - Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

[CDC - Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19 Vaccination](#)

[CDC - Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States](#)

[CDC - Emerging SARS-CoV-2 Variants](#)

[LeadingAge Vaccination Clinic Tips and Tools for Housing Providers](#)

**CDC check in.** We had the opportunity to check in with CDC staff on the Pharmacy Partnership Thursday, and posed several questions that were raised by members. Much of this information has been incorporated into the LeadingAge FAQs. Some of the answers include:

- No states are reclaiming doses from Pharmacy Partnership clinics if the doses are needed to immunize staff and residents. The program allocated too many doses for each facility – enough to cover everyone at full capacity. If that turns out to be more than the number of doses needed to

cover actual staff and residents in the community, the state will take the extra doses back to reallocate. This has been misreported in the press.

- There won't be any changes to the advice on masks – that is, double masking is being reported in the media, but there will be no change in CDC guidance.
- CDC is anticipating putting out guidance at some point on boosters and PPLTC clinics, if it turns out additional boosters are needed to address new strains.
- The Retail Pharmacy Program will be announced very soon (days? weeks? – not clear yet, but soon). Once it's up and running, anyone will be able to go into the CDC website, find a pharmacy (including as many as 40,000 pharmacies nationwide; and LTC pharmacies) and arrange an onsite clinic.
- Why are staff permitted to get a first shot at a third PPLTC clinic, but not residents? CDC advises that the majority of PPLTC clinics use Pfizer. The Retail Pharmacy Program will use Moderna. Staff may get their first dose at an onsite PPLTC clinic because staff are able to find a community location or provider who will provide a second dose of the Pfizer vaccine. Residents are not able to get out into the community as easily, to find a second dose. If provider organizations bring in clinics under the Retail Pharmacy Program, it's anticipated they will use Moderna.

**CDC insights on vaccines.** Dr. Nimalie Stone, the medical epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control, joined today's Coronavirus Update call. She discussed the CDC's perspectives on vaccines and answered frequently asked questions. A summary of the interview can be found [here](#).

**New EO on Medicaid and Health Care Access:** [Today's EO](#) directs federal agencies to review and roll back any rule or administrative action that "limits Americans' access to health care, and consider actions that will protect and strengthen that access." We will monitor closely what HHS, CMS and others do as a result. We expect CMS will try to roll back some of the work requirement and other 'restrictive' 1115 waivers, and may leverage the EO to expand access to services our members provide. The EO also creates a special enrollment period starting in February for new and current Exchange enrollees (more on that [here](#)).

Full EO text here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/28/executive-order-on-strengthening-medicaid-and-the-affordable-care-act/>

Fact Sheet: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/01/28/fact-sheet-president-biden-to-sign-executive-orders-strengthening-americans-access-to-quality-affordable-health-care/>

**Opportunity to participate in Age-Friendly Health Systems Action Community.** The Institute for Healthcare Improvement invites health care providers to join the Age-Friendly Health Systems Action Community. Teams interested in participating in an action community will identify a clinical setting to pilot test the program, bring together an interdisciplinary team and identify a leader to support the team's activities. More details [here](#) - on the third page of this document are details about a webinar on February 23 from 1:00 – 2:00 Eastern time that will provide more details.

**Provider Relief Update:** We are hearing that the Phase 3 funds may have started going out to providers. This is anecdotal information, as we still have had no report from HHS directly regarding any of the Provider Relief Fund distributions that have occurred this week. We have every reason to believe that the Monday,

Jan. 25 distribution was for the Nursing Home Infection Control November Incentive payments. Also a reminder that the [PRF Reporting Portal](#) is open for providers to register at this time. Nicole wrote an [article](#) that summarizes and provides links to key resources providers should review before they begin the registration process. There is still no date certain for when the first reports will be due.

**Janine Finck-Boyle starred in Wednesday's CDC/CMS Fireside Chat.** The weekly Fireside Chat with CDC and CMS conversation centered, as expected, around vaccines. Read the highlights [here](#). The recording will be posted by the end of the week on [the CMS website](#).

**Five Star Quality Rating System on Care Compare Updates This Week.** Just a reminder that the Five Star Quality Rating System will update on Care Compare, the new website that replaces Nursing Home Compare. As announced in [this CMS memo](#) from December, all 3 domains and the overall star rating will be updated tomorrow with the January / quarterly refresh. Recall that each of the 3 domains have been frozen (partially or in full) at different points over the past year due to the public health emergency. Along with updated star ratings, other information shared on Care Compare such as Special Focus Facility and SFF candidate identifiers and the abuse icon. For more information, check out [this analysis](#) of the December memo.

**Questions about updates to CMS guidance.** We've received a number of questions from members about when CMS guidance will change now that nursing home residents and staff are getting vaccinated. The short answer to this question is "not any time soon." We have been told that guidance related to COVID mitigation strategies, including visitation restrictions, testing requirements, masking, PPE, social distancing, and cohorting, is not likely to change for several months. First, more of the population needs to be vaccinated. Second, we need to see how wide-spread vaccination impacts various measures such as community prevalence and positivity, hospitalization rates, and deaths.

We know fielding these questions can be challenging for members and disheartening for the residents, families, and staff. Know that CMS is not sitting on their hands—we are told that they are constantly evaluating with CDC and we keep this topic fresh in our communication with both groups. It will be important for providers to help residents, families, and staff understand that while vaccines will help us fight off infection if we come in contact with the virus, we don't know at this point if vaccines can also prevent us from transmitting the virus to others. Until more is known, we must continue to adhere to current guidance and the mitigation measures that have proven to be effective. Vaccination, testing, and mitigation strategies will be the best way to keep residents, their families, and staff safe.

**New report on risk assessment and testing in congregate care.** Several LeadingAge experts were interviewed by Duke University researchers for a white paper, "[Risk Assessment and Testing Considerations for Reducing SRS-COV-2 Transmission in Congregate Care Facilities](#)," aimed at helping administrators understand how to assess the risk of a COVID-19 infection coming into their community, the risk of transmission inside the community, and the likely consequences of an outbreak. Policy needs and recommendations are summarized [here](#).

**FROM HHS:**

**New Steps to Boost Vaccine Supply and Increase Transparency for States, Tribes, and Territories:** The President announced [steps that will help meet the goal of administering 100 million shots in 100 days and ramp up vaccine supply as fast as possible](#). As a result of these actions, the federal government will have enough vaccine supply for the entire U.S. population by the end of the summer. The President is taking the

following actions: 1) An Increase in Weekly Vaccine Supply to States, Tribes and Territories; 2) Increased Transparency for States, Tribes, and Territories to Help Their Vaccination Efforts; 3) Purchase of 200 Million Additional Doses to Be Delivered This Summer

**Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines:** CDC has updated their page on [building confidence in the COVID-19 vaccines](#). Some people may hesitate to get a COVID-19 vaccine. They may want answers to their questions about the process for developing and authorizing these vaccines and information about their safety and effectiveness. People may have previous experiences that affect their trust and confidence in the health system.

**FEMA Obligates Nearly \$1 Billion in First Days of Vaccine Mission:** [FEMA has obligated nearly \\$1 billion to costs related to the COVID-19 vaccine mission](#) and continues to work with states throughout the nation in funding costs related to the COVID-19 vaccine mission. The award provides over \$988 million in federal funding to Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. These funds are being provided to reimburse costs associated with emergency protective measures taken by governments to store, handle, transport, distribute and administer vaccines to reduce the spread the of the virus.**COVID-19 Vaccine Codes:** Preview posting of [COVID-19 vaccine codes and crosswalk](#) in anticipation of potential vaccine availability under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). The codes and crosswalk for candidate COVID-19 vaccines will be posted for preview in phases as the late-stage clinical trials for candidate vaccines progress. Additional vaccines will be added to this list as they enter late-stage clinical trials.

**FDA COVID-19 Response:** The FDA has updated its [FDA COVID-19 Response At-A-Glance Summary](#), which provides a quick look at facts, figures, and highlights on the FDA's response efforts.

**Testing Update:** As of today, 320 tests and sample collection devices are authorized by the FDA under emergency use authorizations (EUAs). These include 238 molecular tests and sample collection devices, 69 antibody tests, and 13 antigen tests. There are 33 molecular authorizations that can be used with home-collected samples. There is one molecular prescription at-home test, one antigen prescription at-home test, and one over-the-counter (OTC) at-home antigen test.

**Preliminary Medicare COVID-19 Data Snapshot:** The [Medicare COVID-19 data snapshot](#) reports COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations data for Medicare beneficiaries diagnosed with COVID-19. This fact sheet gives you aggregate data and visuals from Medicare Fee-for-Service claims data, Medicare Advantage encounter data, and Medicare enrollment information

**CDC Updated ICAR tool for Nursing Homes.** CDC has updated [the Infection Prevention and Control Assessment and Response \(ICAR\) tool for nursing homes](#). Remember, the ICAR tool is not required like the [CMS COVID-19 Focused Survey for Nursing Homes](#) is, but is a valuable resource to assist nursing homes in preparing for and responding to COVID-19. Updates include:

- Additions to reflect updated guidance such as SARS-CoV-2 testing in nursing homes
- Increased emphasis on the review of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use and handling
- Addition of sections to help guide a video tour as part of a remote TeleICAR assessment or in-person tour of a nursing home
- Addition of an accompanying facilitator guide to aide with the conduction of the ICAR and create subsequent recommendations for the facility

**DEI Survey for MSOs and Life Plan Communities.** LeadingAge's newly adopted strategic plan places the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) front and center for 2021. Over the next 3 years, LeadingAge will offer members a host of practical tools and resources they can use to develop a more diverse and inclusive workforce. LeadingAge launched the DEI initiative by sending a brief survey on January 19 to chief executive officers at approximately 900 LeadingAge multisite organizations and life plan communities. The DEI survey is designed to help LeadingAge identify steps members have taken to make their organizations more diverse and inclusive, understand the role of the person who oversees the DEI initiative, and learn the challenges organizations are encountering as they work to reach their diversity goals. The DEI survey takes only 5 minutes to complete. Surveys have been sent via email and participants will have approximately 2-3 weeks to complete the surveys online. Check the state exec forum for a newsletter article you can use to promote the survey.

**The Impact of the Resident's Voice on Medicare Reimbursement.** Completing scripted interviews on MDS assessments is critically important for many reasons, and a must-do to receive proper Medicare Part A reimbursement. In this 13-minute QuickCast, Jessie McGill from the American Association of Post-Acute Care Nursing reviews what care providers should know to make sure residents are being accurately assessed and provided with appropriate care. [Watch now](#) in the LeadingAge Learning Hub.

**Please Take the LeadingAge Project ECHO Survey.** LeadingAge is interested in learning more about member participation (both those who are participating currently and those who are not) in [Project ECHO](#), the guided-practice model that reduces health disparities in under-served and remote areas of the state, nation, and world through innovative telementoring. Please take 2-3 minutes to [complete this survey](#). If you'd like more information about Project ECHO, please contact [Janine Finck-Boyle](#).

**Join us in Urging Congress to Pass Expanded COVID Relief.** Yesterday, LeadingAge members from across the country joined the 2021 Policy Action Forum and discussed the national advocacy plans ahead of us this year. Our collective call to action was loud and clear: it has never been more important for us to raise our voices in support of federal policies that support older adults and aging services providers. [Raise your voice TODAY](#) by asking your members of Congress to support a new COVID-19 relief bill that prioritizes older adults and those who care for them.

**Vaccination Tips and Tools.** LeadingAge is helping members with educating staff and older adults about the COVID-19 vaccines. We're sharing important educational resources and hosting special LeadingAge webinars with pharmacy partners CVS and Walgreens. We'll also connect members with experts on vaccine education on weekly member online updates. Check out our [Vaccination Tips and Tools](#), including a new [Vaccination Clinic Tips and Tools for Housing Providers](#).

**CAST Releases New Guide on Resident Tech Support and Training.** Given the significant and disproportionate impact of COVID-19 and the social isolation it brought on older adults served by LeadingAge members, LeadingAge CAST has released a new [Resident/Client Technology Support and Training Guide](#). It includes a [white paper](#), [interactive guide](#), and [case studies](#) to explain the support, training, and business models available.