



Home Health and Hospice Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

October 1, 2021

LeadingAge Coronavirus Calls. On **Monday, October 4 at 3:30, Brian Kane**, Senior Director of Ethics at the Catholic Health Association of the USA will join the call to talk about the thorny and multi-faceted topic of religious exemptions. In particular he will address questions and concerns that have been raised about the use of fetal cells in relation to COVID vaccines currently available. Brian will talk about [this Statement from Pro-Life Catholic Scholars on the Moral Acceptability of Receiving COVID-19 Vaccines](#), from the Ethics and Public Policy Center. He'll answer caller questions and discuss how Catholic health and aging services provider organizations are dealing with religious exemptions. If you haven't registered for LeadingAge Update Calls, [you can do so here](#).

Hospice updates from CMS. CMS sent "important updates on the Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP)" today. As noted in the CMS email, "Swingtech sends informational messages to hospices related to the Quality Reporting Program (QRP) on a quarterly basis. Their latest outreach communication can be found on the [HQRP Requirements and Best Practices webpage](#). If you want to receive Swingtech's quarterly emails, then add or update the email addresses to which these messages are sent by sending an email to QRPHelp@swingtech.com. Be sure to include your facility name and CMS Certification Number (CCN) along with any requested updates." In today's update, found [here](#), CMS reminds hospices that to meet the HQRP requirements both Hospice Item Set and CAHPS Hospice Survey requirements must be submitted in a timely manner. In addition, a reminder that public reporting of hospice data is still frozen and will remain so through the November 2021 refresh.

Home Health & Hospice Provider Town Hall October 19: LeadingAge wants to hear from you about our policy priorities for next year and the kinds of tools that will help you engage in policy work. Your voice is essential to this conversation and we hope you will join us for the Home Health and Hospice Provider Town Hall on Oct. 19 at 2:00 p.m. ET. [Click here to register](#)

Highlights from HRSA's first of 4 webinars on new PRF Application: Thursday's webinar reinforced several things LeadingAge shared with members on Wednesday's Member Coronavirus Call and detailed in the latest PRF [article](#). Here are some highlights: 1) providers should begin the application process NOW because the first step is getting their TIN(s) validated and we know from prior application rounds this is not always an easy task; 2) A new provision has been added to the Terms and Conditions for these funds that requires providers to notify HRSA via the Reporting Portal if they go through a merger or acquisition with any other provider; 3) Providers who were new in 2019 or 2020 are eligible for funds to apply for funds but will have some additional steps in the application process that are outlined in the application instructions; 4) There is no penalty for providers to check "yes" on their application indicating they would like to be considered for the American Rescue Plan Rural funds. A provider will receive some amount even if they only serve one rural beneficiary. So, all should check "yes"; and 5) Rural funds received can only be allocated to the relevant rural TIN. They cannot be allocated to a non-rural subsidiary. As always, reach out to Nicole (NFallon@LeadingAge.org) with questions.

And a reminder - HRSA to host Provider Relief Webinars. If you missed it, here's an [article](#) about HRSA updates to the Provider Relief Fund website. In addition, HRSA will offer a series of webinars on the next round of PRF payments. There is a webinar on Tuesday, October 5, 3:00 – 4:00 PM ET (sign up [here](#)). They will cover who is eligible to apply, how payments are determined, how the application process works, and how to navigate the application portal and successfully complete an application. Additional webinars will soon be announced for October 11 and 18, with information coming out soon. We will share it as soon as we know.

Continuing Resolution Until December 3. Thursday the Senate and House passed a continuing resolution (CR) to keep federal programs funded absent enactment of annual appropriations bills. The CR will keep federal programs funded at fiscal year 2021 levels until December 3, just more than two months into fiscal year 2022. Congress has not enacted any of its 12 annual appropriations bills. LeadingAge has been assured by HUD officials that FY21 funding levels will be sufficient for HUD-assisted housing programs to continue through December 3. The President is expected to sign the CR prior to midnight, September 30, before the October 1 start of the federal fiscal year to avert a federal government shutdown.

Vaccine Mandates: Q & A on Upcoming OSHA ETS For Businesses with 100 or more Employees. There are a lot of questions about the upcoming OSHA emergency temporary standard (ETS) addressing vaccine mandates or weekly testing requirements that will apply to all employers with 100 or more employees. The Health Action Alliance hosted a town hall last week with three experts and provided some [answers to top questions](#) they received on the upcoming OSHA ETS. We are also awaiting the CMS vaccine mandate for providers that participate in the Medicare and Medicaid program and will review how these two rules will apply to LeadingAge members. We anticipate both rules will be released sometime in October.

Future of Telehealth Webinar. On Tuesday, October 5 at 1:00 PM ET, The Hill will host a webinar, The New Role of Telehealth. Among the featured speakers is LeadingAge national Board Member Karyne Jones of the National Caucus and Center on Black Aged. The focus of the session will be on improving patient care and the role of telemedicine in the healthcare system of the US. Questions that panelists will explore include how we approach the balance between virtual and in-person visits, how we fill care gaps and better utilize technology and how we ensure the highest quality for all people using healthcare services. [Here's](#) the link to register for the free session.

Regular information for clinicians on Monoclonal Antibodies. HHS hosts regular stakeholder calls on COVID-19 Monoclonal Antibody Therapeutics. They post regular information for clinicians on [this homepage](#), including recordings of the prior week's calls. [Here](#) are the slides that were used on today's update call.

FROM HHS:

1. **Studies Show More COVID-19 Cases in Areas Without School Masking Policies:** On Friday, CDC released three studies in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* that [highlight the importance of using layered prevention strategies including universal masking to stop the spread and minimize disruptions to school operations for safe in-person education](#). These studies found that school districts without a universal masking policy in place were more likely to have COVID-19 outbreaks. Nationwide, counties without masking requirements saw the number of pediatric COVID-19 cases increase nearly twice as quickly during this same period.

- 2. Science Update:** On Friday, CDC [released their weekly COVID-19 Science Update](#). This week's update includes research on the duration of protection of COVID-19 vaccines against clinical disease, equity and uneven distribution of federal COVID-19 relief funds to US hospitals, and more.

Congressional Update. This is a huge and consequential week in Congress. Build Back Better Act (reconciliation): The House Budget Committee stitched together all 2465 pages of the various bills marked up by Ways & Means, Energy & Commerce, Ed & Labor, Financial Services and more on Saturday but the Speaker has put off voting till Thursday because she, the White House and Senate majority leader Schumer are still negotiating within the Democratic Party for a bill that satisfies both the moderates that appear to want a smaller bill (not clear how this will affect our LTSS provisions) and the progressives that are happy with the current bill. Room for advocacy, as the bill is not final yet! Check out our Action Alerts [here](#). We are continuing to meet with Hill offices on Build Back Better, to keep the focus on the care infrastructure provisions important to the aging community.

Workforce Well-Being: It's About Burnout. This Spotlight on the LeadingAge Learning Hub explores common distress symptoms and proven strategies to manage compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic. [Free to access for LeadingAge members.](#)

Deadline Extended! Staffing Member Snap Survey. LeadingAge is seeking to better understand the staffing situation in provider member organizations across the continuum—to inform our advocacy efforts with members of Congress and the Administration. To better serve you, we need to illustrate what the workforce crisis looks like on the ground. [Please take a few minutes to complete the survey](#) by next Wednesday to ensure we have the latest information to share with policymakers.

LeadingAge Story Collector: A Strategic Growth Plan Keeps This Organization Focused. The new [LeadingAge Story Collector](#) makes it easy to tell your story by making a brief audio recording or writing-in your story. The [latest example](#) comes from LeadingAge Gold Partner Greystone, which supports the [Story Collector](#), about a LeadingAge member used its strategic planning process to envision long-term growth. [Visit the Story Collector](#) to tell your stories of innovation. Right now, we are especially interested in stories of practical workforce innovations. Submissions don't have to be perfect; LeadingAge staff will contact you to gather more details!

Addressing Vaccine Mandates and Exemption Requests. In this [virtual update](#), Lane Powell addresses key legal and operational issues related to mandatory vaccination policies, including medical and religious exemption requests. Learn how to handle an employee's request for an exemption, the type of inquiries an employer can make if an exemption is requested, and examples of reasonable accommodations your organization can consider. [Free to access for LeadingAge members.](#)

Notice: Beware of Unauthorized Annual Meeting List Solicitations. You may receive emails from solicitors posing as LeadingAge claiming they have our attendee list for sale. These companies are not affiliated with LeadingAge or the Annual Meeting & EXPO. LeadingAge does not sell attendee information. Please report anyone that reaches out to you to the LeadingAge Sales team at Sales@LeadingAge.org.

Take Action Now: Urge the U.S. House to Support Our Aging Infrastructure. Now is the moment to ensure programs and resources are not cut as the process moves forward! [Send a message to your U.S.](#)

[Representative and Senators today](#), and [read LeadingAge's latest press release](#) calling for Congress to lock in long-overdue support for older adults & their families.

New Website: OpeningDoors.org. OpeningDoors.org is live! In July, LeadingAge launched Opening Doors to Aging Services, a long-term initiative to offer members and the entire field first-of-its-kind research, strategies, and resources to inform and align efforts across the sector. The initiative is founded on a robust research and discovery phase. We debut a new website to share complete strategic communications guidance on how to leverage those insights. [OpeningDoors.org](#) is a one-stop shop where members and others in the field can access the initiative's strategies, resources, and tools. Later in the month, LeadingAge members will find exclusive members-only implementation resources. Watch LeadingAge Need to Know for updates!

LeadingAge Member Stories: Introducing High School Students to Long-Term Services and Supports. [Our latest member story](#) is about programs designed to recruit high schoolers for career opportunities in our field—programs that combine job training, work experience, and life skills coaching for students at risk of not graduating. LeadingAge also wants to hear your stories of practical workforce innovations; the [LeadingAge Story Collector](#), powered by Greystone, makes it easy. Submissions don't have to be perfect; LeadingAge staff will contact you to gather more details!