



Nursing Home Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

October 9, 2020

Join the LeadingAge Coronavirus Update Call at 3:30 Eastern on Monday, October 12! Providing care for residents with dementia has been a challenge during the pandemic, however the James L. West Center for Dementia Care in Fort Worth, Texas strives to address these obstacles and provide safe care during difficult times. Join Cathy Neece-Brown as she discusses how her organization has been able to provide unique programming and services that have helped to develop a waiting list of families wanting to join their community. She will also provide insight on how her organization was able to retain provider relief funds as a private pay facility and how they are also working to increase the pipeline of new direct care workers through an innovative partnership with their local school district. If you aren't already registered for the call, [join us here](#)

Project ECHO sign up - The National Nursing Home COVID-19 Action Network is an opportunity for nursing homes to voluntarily join a Project ECHO learning collaborative. Participants will work in small groups, with teams from each nursing home joining weekly calls to hear from experts and to share information with other participating nursing homes about what they've tried and how it has worked. Participating nursing homes will receive \$6,000 each. The best way to get in from the ground up on Project ECHO is to sign up to participate through [this link](#).

More on Project ECHO - The team at the University of New Mexico has made some changes to accommodate nursing homes that are interested in participating but raised questions. Changes include:

- Teams do NOT have to include the most senior staff or a medical director or director of nursing.
- Teams may consist of three members, rather than being held to four. Participants from a facility can take turns, as long as they bring information back to the full team. For example, a nursing home might have seven people participating in the learning collaborative. They could alternate weeks, with one three- person team attending one week and a four- person team attending the next week.
- Minimum attendance to qualify for the \$6,000 stipend from Provider Relief Funds is now 13 sessions.

ECHO staff are aware that some hubs are already reaching out to nursing homes. It is still recommended to sign up through [this link](#).

CMS Announces New Repayment Terms for Medicare Loans made to Providers during COVID-19: CMS announced a one year grace period for repayment of loans/advance payments received by providers. Now, payments are to begin one year from the issuance date of each provider or supplier's accelerated or advance payment. The [amended terms for payments issued under the Accelerated and Advance Payment \(AAP\) Program](#) was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President as part of the Continuing Resolution. The Medicare loan program had allowed CMS to make advance payments to providers and is typically used in emergency situations. Under the *Continuing Appropriations Act*,

2021 and Other Extensions Act repayment will now begin one year from the issuance date of each provider or supplier's accelerated or advance payment. CMS issued \$106 billion in payments to providers and suppliers in order to alleviate the financial burden healthcare providers faced while experiencing cash flow issues in the early stages of combating the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). For more information, CMS released a [Fact Sheet](#) and [FAQs](#) related to the Accelerated and Advance Payment Repayment and Recovery terms. [This article](#) provides detailed information on the changes made to the program in the CR.

Information on Self-Collecting Anterior Nasal Samples for Health Care Providers. The FDA issued a letter to [health care providers](#) recommending that health care providers give clear, step-by-step instructions to patients who, in a health care setting, are self-collecting anterior nasal samples for SARS-CoV-2 testing. Without proper instructions, patients may not collect an adequate sample for testing, which may decrease the sensitivity of the test.

Voting - CMS released [this memo](#) this week, reminding nursing homes of residents' rights to vote. The memo describes some different options for voting; providers should be supporting residents to exercise the right to vote in this and all elections. Don't forget to check out our [LeadingAge resources](#) for how we can help the older adults in our lives exercise this right.

COVID-19 vaccines - Conversation around vaccine prioritization and allocation is heating up. LeadingAge joined a call with CDC where they discussed the [NASEM framework](#) released last week. CDC is working on a plan to support long term care. We expect to be able to share more details on this next week.

CDC FAQ on Nursing Home Testing - CDC updated an FAQ to include new information on Nursing Home Testing. Check it out [here](#). In particular, providers should refer to the question on infection prevention and control measures for those who receive a positive antigen test result followed by a negative PCR result. Several factors need to be considered when determining how to proceed, and we know this has been a source of confusion/frustration with members and their health departments.

CDC Update on Transmission - CDC updated guidance on the transmission of COVID-19 to include airborne transmission. Airborne transmission means virus hangs in the air for minutes or even hours and can infect people further than 6 feet away or after the infected person has left the area. Evidence indicates that when airborne transmission has occurred, it has been in enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation. **Airborne transmission is uncommon; close contact is still the most common source of spread of COVID-19.** Nonetheless, this new information highlights the importance of adequate ventilation and source control (masking of nose and mouth, social distancing). Here are 4 things providers can do:

- Stress the importance of masks and social distancing with residents/patients, staff, and visitors.
- Talk with your building engineer about ventilation.
- Bring in fresh outdoor air as much as possible.
- Allow ample time before entering spaces for cleaning and turn-over. Check out this [CDC guide](#) on air changes / hour for airborne contaminant removal.

Provider Relief Phase 3 Application - The application process for Phase 3 opened today and will remain open until 11:59p ET on Nov. 6. Phase 3 is open to all providers who have applied before and received a

full 2% General Distribution, in addition to all other previously eligible providers. There are two newly eligible groups for this application: 1) behavioral health providers including those who are exclusively private pay and/or accept commercial insurance, and 2) providers who opened/began delivering care in the first quarter of 2020. Providers are encouraged to apply early as the distribution process is also different this time with a two-step process. The first step will be to review applicants to ensure they receive a full 2% payment in combination with any prior general distribution payments received. After that, HHS will seek to “calculate an equitable add-on payment” for providers demonstrating a continuing need for funds. All providers seeking funds in Phase 3 must submit an application and this application will require providers to submit additional information to support their financial losses and increased expenditures due to the coronavirus. We are still waiting for further information about HHS webinars that will provide additional instruction about the application process. [This Phase 3 Primer](#) pulls together all the new information from the HHS website regarding the Phase 3 application.

Provider Relief Funds new FAQs on Infection Control fund uses and Phase 3 Application

Clarifications. HHS clarified in its recently updated [FAQs](#) on Provider Relief that the Nursing Home Infection Control Payments can be used to hire AND retain staff. **The Terms and Conditions for the Nursing Home Infection Control limit use of payments to certain infection control expenses, including hiring staff, whether employees or independent contractors, to provide patient care or administrative support. Is “hiring” limited to only bringing on new staff or may funds be used for existing staff? (Added 10/5/2020)**

- Payments from the Nursing Home Infection Control Distribution may be used to cover “hiring” expenses related to both recruiting new hires and the continued payment and retention of existing staff to provide patient care or administrative support.
- The [FAQs](#) also provide additional details regarding the Phase 3 application process. The FAQs clarify that HHS will review all the applications prior to distributing any of the \$20B from this tranche. So, this means these payments won’t make their way to providers until mid to late November at the earliest. The goal appears to be to ensure all eligible providers first get their full 2 % and then provide add-on payments to those who demonstrate continued need beyond what has been received to date.

Missing a POC machine? (and other antigen testing news) - HHS has been very responsive to our lists of nursing home providers who did not receive point of care testing devices. They check their records and once everything checks out, they ship replacement devices quickly. If LeadingAge member nursing homes were on the list to receive a device and did not receive it, please send the name of the organization and a contact person name and email to Janine (JFinck-Boyle@leadingage.org) and she’ll make sure the HHS team knows about it and can investigate and provide a replacement.

On the antigen testing theme, here’s an article summarizing some of [the key points Admiral Giroir made](#) on the Update Call on Monday. Also, along the same lines (antigen testing), we sent a set of questions to the staff point person in Assistant Secretary Giroir’s office to obtain better information on their allocation and distribution plans for BinaxNow (Abbott) cards specifically for home health and hospice providers.

Skilled Nursing Facility FY 2021 Medicare Rate Tool - Members now have access to a [Medicare rate tool](#) for skilled nursing facilities updated for fiscal year (FY) 2021. This incorporates the 2.2% rate update from the final rule and identifies the year over year change from last year. The rate changes are available at the county level. It should be noted that some counties changed their urban/rural

distinction based on OMB definitions. This could have an additive effect up or down if your county was impacted by that change. Member login is required to access the tool.

Toolkit on State Actions to Mitigate COVID-19 Prevalence in Nursing Homes - CMS updated the [toolkit on state actions to mitigate COVID-19 prevalence in nursing homes](#), including recent information and guidance on vaccinations to prevent infection with influenza virus, pneumococcus, and SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

Fight the Flu Vaccine Campaign Kickoff - HHS has developed this set of tools to spread the word – Getting an annual flu vaccine is more important than ever this fall. #FightFlu by getting vaccinated today. Say #BooToTheFlu: During the month of October, use #BooToTheFlu to encourage others to get their flu vaccine by Halloween. More Info: ["Boo To The Flu" Toolkit](#)

RWJF Award for Health Equity: Nominations Open -Nominations are now open for the 2020 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Award for Health Equity. LeadingAge presents this annual award to recognize an individual or a team of 2 individuals who are working to increase access to services, supports, and opportunities that enable vulnerable elders to lead healthy lives. The Nomination deadline is midnight on Friday, November 13. The winner(s) will receive a cash prize, complimentary registration and travel to the 2021 LeadingAge Annual Meeting & EXPO, and recognition during an RWJF-sponsored event. [Learn how to nominate someone for the award.](#)

Rethinking Ageist Marketing Imagery - In [this QuickCast](#), Seiden Advertising shares examples of how to be more intentional about using authentic images of older adults in community websites and marketing materials rather than relying on stock photography to depict older consumers. Access this and other resources for free on the [Learning Hub](#).