



Home Health and Hospice Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

December 3, 2021

What are we learning about the Omicron variant? What are the new COVID treatments and do they work? And, how are large multistate providers implementing their corporate vaccine mandate for staff. Join LeadingAge Coronavirus Update Calls next week to learn more about these and other COVID issues. On **Monday, December 6**, we will welcome back “Your Local Epidemiologist, **Dr. Katlyn Jetelina**. She will provide up to the minute updates and analysis on the new treatments for COVID-19 and how Omicron may impact vaccines and boosters. She will also take your questions on what is happening across the country with COVID-19. We continue to also get questions on how LeadingAge members are working to implement vaccine policies for staff and on **Wednesday, December 8**, we will be joined by **Nate Schema**, President and CEO of The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society, the nation’s largest non-profit provider of senior care and services. Nate will share his organizations success on building trust and confidence with employees and continue to strengthen staff morale during this tough times. If you haven’t registered for LeadingAge Update Calls, [you can do so here](#).

New Action Alert! Senate Must Pass the Build Back Better Infrastructure Package and Take Out Harmful Nursing Home Provisions. As the Senate debates the historic expansions in housing, services, and workforce in the House-passed Build Back Better Act (H.R. 5376), we want to urge Senators to preserve these ground-breaking provisions and increase the funding for new construction of HUD Section 202 homes for low-income older people. However, to preserve maximum choice for older people and their families, there are two provisions in the bill related to nursing home staffing that LeadingAge cannot support without key changes. Retaining the nursing home staffing study and the 24 hour registered nurse coverage requirements as currently written will make it impossible for many nursing homes to survive. We need your help now! Without these changes and further investments in our aging services infrastructure, too many older adults will not have their basic needs met. Send a message to your U.S. Senators today: LINK: <https://mobilize4change.org/dzZTVvC>.

CMS Issues Memo Related to Vaccine Mandate: CMS issued a memo Thursday afternoon acknowledging the court rulings from Missouri and Louisiana that prohibit CMS from implementing and enforcing the interim final rule in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and US Territories. CMS has appealed both court decisions and filed motions for stays of the orders but states, “while these preliminary injunctions are in effect, surveyors must not survey providers for compliance with the requirements of the Interim Final Rule.” Read the full CMS memo [here](#).

Provider Relief Fund Payment Updates: HRSA shared on a stakeholder’s call that 43,759 providers qualified for American Rescue Plan (ARP) rural payments through the Provider Relief Fund and 90% of payments went to providers located in rural areas. 68% of the ARP rural payments went to acute care hospitals based upon the methodology for these payments compared to 11% to nursing homes. Payments were determined based upon analyzing Medicare and Medicaid claims data from January 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020 to determine the volume and type of services a provider delivered to rural beneficiaries. For more information, here is an [article](#) on the ARP Rural payments so members

know what those payments in their bank account is for. HRSA also noted that they plan to start sending out Phase 4 PRF Payments in mid to late December.

Registration open for the December 16 Hospice Quality Reporting Program Forum: On Thursday, December 16th from 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. ET, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will host a webinar to share updates on the Hospice Quality Reporting Program. The webinar will focus on providing information from subject matter experts on the following topics: The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers & Systems (CAHPS) Hospice Survey; and Introduction of Star Ratings. There will be time at the end of the webinar for questions. CMS will also answer questions at the end of the webinar. Members can register [here](#).

OSHA Extends Comments Period for the Vaccination and Testing ETS. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration on Wednesday issued a 45-day [extension](#) to the comment period for the COVID-19 vaccination and testing emergency temporary standard (ETS) for employers with 100 or more employees. OSHA says the deadline was pushed to Jan. 19, 2022, to allow stakeholders time to review the ETS and collect information and data necessary for comment. OSHA is currently prohibited from implementing and enforcing the ETS because a preliminary injunction is in place until we get a further decision from the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals.

CDC Update on First Omicron case in USA. This week CDC issued this [fact sheet](#) on the first confirmed case of the Omicron variant in the US. They included the following information along with the fact sheet: The recent emergence of the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529) further emphasizes the importance of vaccination, boosters, and [general prevention strategies](#) needed to protect against COVID-19. Everyone 5 and older should get vaccinated and boosters are recommended for everyone 18 years and older.

CDC issued a [media statement](#) regarding this first confirmed case of Omicron variant detected in the United States. CDC will provide updates as more information becomes available. For more information on the Omicron variant visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/variant.html>.

Summaries of interviews in selected recent LeadingAge Coronavirus Update calls. Here are written summaries of some recent interviews on COVID Update Calls. Today, December 1, we spoke with [Dr. Ghinwa Dumyati](#), an infectious disease physician and Professor of Medicine at the University of Rochester Medical Center; she also practices in nursing homes in the Rochester area. On November 29, we interviewed [Sue DiRosario](#), Director of Support Services for Making Community Happen(MCH) (Methodist Conference Home) in Rockland, Maine.

CMS Stops Seriously Ill Part of the Primary Care First Model: CMS and CMMI have been reviewing the Seriously Ill Population component of the Primary Care First (PCF) Model. This element presented an opportunity to target high-needs, seriously ill Medicare beneficiaries with more coordinated care and also engaged hospice and palliative care service providers. Here is a short [article](#) on today's announcement.

Capitol Hill Update. December will be a busy and consequential month – three big issues are pending and all are likely to be decided before the end of the year!

First up is appropriations. The Continuing Resolution (CR) that keeps the federal government open, and funds HUD, Older Americans Act, broadband and other non-Medicare/Medicaid programs expires Friday night. Since none of the agency appropriations bills have passed,

expect another CR either through the end of this year or beginning of next to allow both sides to come to agreement on an “omnibus” appropriations bill to fund the rest of the fiscal year. Worst case scenario would be a CR through FY 2022, which would be based on funding from 2020.

Second is raising the debt ceiling – this is the arcane and artificial limit that the government can spend on already-appropriated funds. As with appropriations, there is bipartisan desire to address this but negotiations seem stalled and a December 15 deadline looming, so stay tuned.

Finally, the Build Back Better Act is now in the Senate, where it will likely undergo some changes, depending on negotiations within the Democratic caucus. Majority Leader Schumer has indicated a desire to vote by Christmas at which point the bill would go back to the House because of changes made to the House bill, and while it is possible that the House would vote before the end of the year, this is very ambitious and we will have to see. For our purposes, we are using this time to advocate for increased funding for the HUD 202 program and changes to the nursing home staffing mandates (e.g., eliminating the mandates, providing funding, etc.). We have a new [one-pager](#) to share.

2022 Annual Meeting Call for Sessions Deadline December 6. Submit your proposals now for next year’s Annual Meeting + EXPO, October 16-19, 2022 in Denver, CO. Learn more, get answers to common questions, and complete your submission [here](#) by December 6.

Vaccine Mandate Tools & Resources. LeadingAge is gathering resources on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ (CMS) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s (OSHA) Interim Final Rules mandating COVID-19 vaccination. Visit our [Vaccine Mandates: Information, Tools & Resources page](#) for resources to help your organization navigate these mandates.

