



PACE Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

February 25, 2022

Coronavirus Update Call Next Week. On Monday, February 28 at 3:30 PM ET we will be back to talk about the importance of preparing for future COVID-19 surges and also how providers can best protect and advocate for your employees. Research is showing that the Omicron surge had an unequal toll on workers and stretched families as they balanced work with family responsibilities. On Monday's call we will hear from Dr. Julia Raifman, a leading professor from Boston University School of Public Health who will share her research on building trust with employees around vaccines and preparing for what can come next. If you haven't registered for LeadingAge Update Calls, [you can do so here](#).

More than Half of Emergency Rental Assistance Funds Remain. Of the \$46.5 billion provided for the Emergency Rental Assistance program, just 44% (\$20.6 billion) was used to help renters with payments and arrears for rent and utility bills through December 2022, according to data released on February 24 by the Treasury. Congress provided the \$46.5 billion through two large COVID relief bills in 2020 and 2021. Of the expended funds, more than 60% went to extremely low income households (households with incomes less than 30% of area median income) according to new Treasury data on the ERA program. About two-thirds of ERA recipient households were headed by women. The first tranche of ERA funding (for "ERA1") of \$25 billion was provided in the FY21 omnibus appropriations bill; these ERA1 Funds generally expire on September 30, 2022. The second tranche of ERA funding (for "ERA2") of \$21.55 billion was provided in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021; ERA2 funds generally expire on September 30, 2025. The funds were distributed by formula allocation to states and to local governments with populations greater than 100,000. For more about the ERA program, including the new data, go [here](#).

Proposed Public Charge Rule: The Department of Homeland Security released a proposed rule titled "[Public Charge Ground of inadmissibility](#)", this rescinds the Trump Administration's interpretation of the term "public charge" and the type of public benefits considered when making a public charge admissibility determination. DHS proposes to consider the following public benefits when making a public charge inadmissibility determination:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- Cash assistance for income maintenance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program;
- State, Tribal, territorial, and local cash assistance for income maintenance; and
- Long-term institutionalization at government expense.

DHS proposes that it will not consider non-cash benefits such as food and nutrition assistance programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Children's Health Insurance Program, most Medicaid benefits (except for long-term institutionalization at government expense), housing benefits, and transportation vouchers. DHS would also not consider disaster assistance received under the Stafford Act; pandemic assistance; benefits received via a tax credit or deduction; or Social Security, government pensions, or other earned benefits.

By law, many categories of noncitizens are exempt from the public charge ground of inadmissibility and would not be subject to the proposed rule. Some of these categories are refugees, asylees, noncitizens applying for or re-registering for temporary protected status (TPS), special immigration juveniles, T and U nonimmigrants, and self-petitioner under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Under the proposed rule, if a noncitizen received public benefits while in an immigration category that is exempt from the public charge ground of inadmissibility, DHS would not consider the noncitizen's past receipt of such benefits as part of any future public charge determination. **The comments for the proposed rule are due on 4/25/2022**

Mental health and older adults: a multi-agency federal discussion. On Tuesday, March 1 at 2:30 PM ET, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute on Aging, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (all components of the US Department of Health and Human Services) will collaborate on a Facebook Live event to discuss mental health and older adults. The session will include live Q&A, highlight relevant research, and share resources for older adults who may be struggling with their mental health. Visit the [Facebook Event Page](#) for more information and to RSVP.

New Action Alert – Tell Congress to Fund Vital Aging Programs and Services. Congress Needs To Pass Funding Bills to Sustain and Expand Aging Programs. It is time for Congress to pass a long-term government funding bill that sustains and expands investments in home and community-based services, affordable housing for low income older adults, and measures that address the aging services sector's severe workforce challenges. Continuing resolutions do not allow for increases to key federal programs that sustain or aging services infrastructure—and that hurt older adults and families across the country. Send a message to your members of Congress and let them know they need to act now: <https://mobilize4change.org/NVSDoWd>.

Right now congressional leaders are negotiating federal investments in aging services programs for next year and we need your help! Too many older adults are struggling to access the essential services they need and funding levels must increase. Senators and Representatives must hear from constituents like you that they can't leave older adults behind. Americans overwhelmingly support increased investments in aging services. Nothing should disrupt Congress from delivering funding increases to help older adults and their families. Send a message to your elected leaders in Congress today by visiting here <https://mobilize4change.org/NVSDoWd>

New March Sessions from Housing and Services Resource Center. The HUD/ACL [Housing and Services Resource Center](#) will host two sessions in March related to cross-sector partnerships that create housing stability.

- *March 7, 3:00 - 4:30 PM ET - Expanded Opportunities with Federal Funding for Housing and Services.* [Register for the webinar.](#) Federal agency leaders will highlight major funding streams for affordable, accessible housing, home and community-based services, and behavioral and mental health services. In particular, the American Rescue Plan provides new opportunities to address disparities among people with disabilities, older adults, and people experiencing homelessness. Presenters will offer models that braid federal funding so all can live successfully and stably in the community. Featured agencies include the Administration for Community Living, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- *March 15, 2:30 – 4:00 PM ET - State and Local Partnerships for Housing Stability.* [Register for the webinar.](#) States and communities have created cross-sector

partnerships that improve housing stability by connecting people to housing and making it easier to obtain supportive services. Presenters from housing, home- and community-based services, and health services will feature their successful approaches. After a showcase of innovative collaborations that braid funding for housing and services, webinar participants will have time to ask questions.

CDC Guidance on Antigen Testing in Long Term Care. Late last week, the [CDC updated guidance on antigen testing in long-term care](#). The update streamlines guidance on how testing is used in determining work restrictions and mitigating shortages among health care staff. It also clarifies when and how to conduct confirmatory testing following the use of antigen tests.