



Home Health and Hospice Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

May 13, 2022

LeadingAge COVID Update Calls May 16 & 18. Now that the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) report on nursing homes has been released, we are looking for next steps and what lies ahead. Policy makers and providers of aging services will need to work together to make changes happen and LeadingAge members can play an important role in this process. On **Monday, May 16, at 3:30pm ET**, we will be joined by leading NASEM report researcher Dr. David Grabowski as he shares his insights on the study's goals and addresses the path forward. LeadingAge members will be able to ask questions and find new ways to help shape the future of aging. On **Wednesday, May 18, at 3:30pm ET**, we will welcome LeadingAge member Zachary Richards from the Jenkins Senior Living Community and The Neighborhoods at St. Elizabeth Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Baltimore that recently hosted CMS Administrator Brooks-LaSure. He will talk about the experience and provide some insights on how CMS is looking for feedback on policy proposals. If you haven't registered for LeadingAge Update Calls, [you can do so here](#). You can also find previous call recordings [here](#). Note that to access recordings of the calls you need a LeadingAge password. Any staff member of any LeadingAge member organization can set up a password to access previous calls and other "members only" content.

Partnerships for Inclusive Transit Planning Webinar: Transportation is a crucial service for many aging services programs. The ACL-funded [Transit Planning 4 All](#) program has promoted the development and dissemination of best practices in transit planning inclusive of people with disabilities and older adults. A major component of these efforts is funding a series of [demonstration projects](#), each seeking to increase inclusion in transportation planning. Transit Planning 4 All is launching an online roundtable series with representatives from these demonstration projects to discuss the lessons learned to date. The first [Roundtable](#) will be held on Monday, May 16, 2 – 3pm ET.

Proposed Legislation on EVV Could Eliminate GPS Requirements. Legislation in Congress, [Cures 2.0](#), could make significant changes to Electronic Visit Verifications (EVV) requirements for home care visits in Medicaid. The bill includes a provision that would "prohibits the use of geographic tracking features and biometrics within EVV systems" out of concerns for beneficiary privacy. States and provider have made significant investments in technologies to meet the current statutory requirements, removing GPS from those requirements could mean additional costs to redo technology.

Home Health Value Based Purchasing Achievement Thresholds and Benchmarks Now Available on IQIES! CMS released individual agency achievement thresholds and benchmarks for each quality measure in the expanded HHVBP Model are now available on [iQIES portal](#). This information will also include your cohort information. As a reminder, these are national cohorts consisting of a minimum of 20 similarly sized agencies (small cohort is fewer than 60 beneficiaries and large cohorts are more than 60 beneficiaries). The achievement thresholds and benchmarks were calculated by cohort using quality measure data for the Model baseline year, which for most long-standing agencies is calendar year (CY) 2019 for the CY 2023 performance year/CY 2025 payment year.

- At the June 7th Home Health Member Network meeting we will be discussing these cohorts, achievement thresholds, and benchmarks as a group. Make sure you are part of the conversation and sign up for the member network [here](#).
- LeadingAge wrote an article on the measures which will be used to calculate these scores [here](#).
- Information on how to access the achievement thresholds and benchmarks is available here: [Instructions for Accessing the Achievement Thresholds and Benchmarks in iQIES](#).
- More information about the achievement thresholds, benchmarks, and cohorts is available here: [Expanded HHVBP Model Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

If you have any issues locating the HHVBP file, you can contact the iQIES Help desk staff by email at iQIES@cms.hhs.gov or by phone at (800) 339-9313. **Please include your name, agency name, and the CCN when contacting the help desks*

Healthy Homes for Older Adults. As part of Older American’s Month, HUD’s Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes is sharing a webinar it coordinated by Sarah L. Szanton, PhD, ANP, FAAN, Patricia M. Davidson Health Equity and Social Justice Endowed Professor, and Director, Center on Innovative Care in Aging, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing. Dr. Szanton’s presentation was on “Equity Through the Built Environment: Healthy Home for Healthy Aging.” Dr. Szanton examined the challenges and opportunities for aging in community with a specific emphasis on addressing health equity. HUD says the webinar “will be useful to patient advocates, social workers, healthcare professionals, community action agencies, state health department staff, state Medicaid programs, Area Agencies on Aging, and others.” Watch the free webinar [here](#).

Medicaid coverage at the end of the PHE. The PHE has most recently been extended to mid-July 2022. As [this](#) new KFF analysis shows, millions of people could lose coverage, but most older adults will remain eligible. States largely be responsible for managing the unwinding of the continuous enrollment requirement, and their efforts to conduct outreach, education and provide enrollment assistance can help ensure that older adults who remain eligible for Medicaid are able to retain coverage. When states resume redeterminations, it is likely that there could be a lot of enrollment churn as individuals who are eligible lose coverage and then re-enroll in a short period of time. This of course will impact providers. The Biden Administration has said that it will give states [a 60-day notice](#) before the PHE expires. If states are not notified by mid-May, the PHE will likely be extended further.

Home Health Value Based Purchasing Measure Resources. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released new resources for home health agencies on the expansion of the Home Health Value-Based Purchasing Program. For more information read this [article](#).

Provider Relief Updates:

- Deadline to submit [late reporting requests](#) to HRSA for Reporting Period 2 has been extended to Wednesday, May 18 at 11:59 pm.

- Providers who submitted late reporting requests for Reporting Period 1 should be notified by HRSA this week about whether their request was approved or denied. This notice will come from this email address: UHG_HRSA@ProviderEmail.uhc.com. Members who submitted a request should check their inboxes and junk mail or spam email for a message from this address. Providers whose requests are approved will only have 10 days from notification to submit their report.

KHN Reports on the Decline of Travel Nurses. A new in-depth [report](#) from Kaiser Health News looks at the rise and decline of travel nurses. As COVID relief funds are being exhausted across the country, contracts for traveling nurse staff are starting to decrease. The report includes an overview of the trends of travel nurse hiring during the pandemic as well as a look at the potential exploitation of the workforce by private equity firms.

FY 2023 Hospice Wage Index Proposed Rule Advocacy: The Hospice Network held its May monthly call Thursday and discussed the FY2023 Hospice Wage Index proposed rule and draft comment letter. LeadingAge shared a [VoterVoice action alert page](#) for hospice members to submit comments on CMS' request for information on health equity.

Study Finds Hospice Policy Changes Reduced Dementia Patient Usage. A [study](#) from the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health found that use of hospice by individuals with Alzheimer disease and related dementias (ADRD) immediately declined after the passage and implementation of the 2014 Improving Medicare Post-Acute Care Transformation (IMPACT) Act. This patient population also saw slower growth in hospice use after the implementation of IMPACT and the 2-tier payment system compared to earlier years of claims data. Study authors believe the results may reflect unintended reduced access for hospice-appropriate patients with ADRD as hospices attempt to minimize risk of long stays. The study calls for additional research on the impact of these policy changes including their impact on the quality of care.

The Indian Health Services Funds Alzheimer's Care. Indian Health Service (IHS) [announced funding](#) for Alzheimer's disease within tribal communities across the United States. IHS announced Monday it is allocating \$5 million to help tribes, tribal organizations and urban Indian organizations develop comprehensive and sustainable approaches to addressing Alzheimer's and other causes of dementia. Eligible tribes and tribal organizations can begin applying for the money now. The application deadline is July 18.

What Providers Should Know About Asian American Family Caregivers. May marks [Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#), which celebrates the histories of Americans hailing from across the Asian continent and from the Pacific islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. [This](#) Diverse Elders Coalition fact sheet highlights unique caregiving perspectives and needs for Asian American Family caregivers. The Diverse Elders Coalition provides technical support to providers as we continue to build welcoming, supportive programs. To download a "Caring For those Who Care: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Family Caregivers" toolkit and enroll in free online trainings, please visit <https://diverseelders.org/caregiving/are>

Webinar Reminder: LTQA May 17 Virtual Briefing on The Future of New Supplemental benefits in Medicare Advantage. Long-Term Quality Alliance (LTQA), in collaboration with ATI Advisory and with support from The SCAN Foundation, will be holding a virtual briefing on the *CHRONIC Care Act* and the future of non-medical supplemental benefits in Medicare Advantage (MA). This expert briefing will provide the latest research on the landscape of supplemental benefits and the current state of SSBCI and other non-medical supplemental benefits in MA and look to the future of these important benefits. Speakers and panelists include Senator Mark Warner, Dr. Meena Seshamani (CMS Center for Medicare), Kelly Cronin (ACL), Christine Aguiar Lynch (ACAP), Marc Cohen (LTSS Center @UMass Boston), Tyler Cromer (ATI Advisory), and Mary Kaschak (LTQA). Those interested can register for the free event here: <https://bit.ly/3tUUaFi> LeadingAge is an active member of LTQA and participates in advising on the research conducted and policies pursued related to the MA supplemental benefits.

Monday

White House Announces Free Internet Under Affordable Connectivity Program. The White House and HUD announced improvements and expansion of the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The White House has negotiated broadband packages of \$30 a month or less, which after the ACP program's \$30 discount, would make these programs free for ACP participants. Also on May 9, HUD reiterated that participation in the ACP will not impact eligibility for HUD programs or tenant rent determinations. Read more in this [article](#).

HCBS Measurement Testing Opportunity: The [Research and Training Center on HCBS Outcome Measurement](#) (RTC/OM) is developing a new set of HCBS measures that are intended to bring providers actionable data that contributes to quality improvement efforts. Currently, RTC/OM is in the validation stage of their research and is seeking additional providers to help them gain access to participants. Once the HCBS measures are validated, involved providers will be the first group to receive training and technical support on implementation of measurements in their HCBS programs. For more information, please email RTC/OM coordinator Matt Roberts at robe0290@umn.edu

New Monthly Report on Climate and Health. A little-known office in the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Climate Change and Health Equity, [released](#) the first edition of the Climate and Health Outlook. The Climate and Health Outlook is an effort to inform health professionals and the public on how our health may be affected in the next 30 and 90 days by climate events and provide resources to take proactive action. This edition focuses on the 2022 early summer season and uses the most current long-term temperature forecasts that come from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to illustrate how extreme heat poses a health risk for all Americans. In May, 203 counties across 14 states are projected to have 5 or more extremely hot days. Of the 203 counties, 26% have a high number of people over 65 living alone. The issue goes on to list resources for people at high risk of heat-related health problems as well as best practices for emergency managers and clinicians to deal with heat related issues.

LTC Workforce Crisis: DOL Responds to Coalition Letter Regarding the Timeliness of Prevailing Wage Determinations for Foreign Nurses. To assist with the nursing shortage, LeadingAge co-signed an April 1, 2022, [coalition letter](#) to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), offering solutions to address concerns

about the timeliness of prevailing wage determinations by DOL's Office of Foreign Labor Certification for Schedule A professions (these are prevailing wage determinations for registered nurses and physical therapists). On May 3, 2022, the coalition received a [letter](#) from Brian Pasternak, the Department of Labor's Administrator for the Office of Foreign Labor Certification (OFLC). Unfortunately, Administrator Pasternak shared the DOL cannot implement the coalition's request of expediting the processing of Schedule A petitions by creating a new category for Schedule A petitions. OFLC is investing in additional staff to address the increase in demand for prevailing wage determinations, as well as other OFLC programs, Administrator Pasternak says. You can view an article [here](#) with additional details regarding Administrator Pasternak's letter and LeadingAge's advocacy to support immigration solutions that ensure there will be enough qualified individuals in the U.S. to fill vacant and future positions in aging services.

<https://leadingage.org/workforce/ltc-workforce-crisis-dol-responds-coalition-letter-regarding-timeliness-prevailing-wage-1>

Medicaid and Mental Health Toolkit – Older adults deserve access to effective and affordable mental health support and counseling. As the **single largest payer** for mental health services, Medicaid plays a unique role in the lives of Americans with mental health challenges. Efforts to address mental health conditions have been a focus in Medicaid at the federal level in recent years, and COVID-19 continues to exacerbate mental health challenges across the country. LeadingAge is a member of the Modern Medicaid Alliance, which has created this **Medicaid & Mental Health Toolkit** in an effort to address these challenges and support those who need it most.

Living with COVID: Week 7. This week, we learned about Post-Acute Sequelae COVID, and explored what Dr. Fauci meant by moving into a “controlled pandemic” state. You can read the transcripts [here](#).

FROM CDC: *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* — Effectiveness of a COVID-19 Additional Primary or Booster Vaccine Dose in Preventing SARS-CoV-2 Infection Among Nursing Home Residents During Widespread Circulation of the Omicron Variant — United States, February 14–March 27, 2022 — Weekly COVID-19 surveillance and vaccination coverage data among nursing home residents, reported by skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) to CDC's National Healthcare Safety Network during February 14–March 27, 2022, when the Omicron variant accounted for >99% of sequenced isolates, were analyzed to estimate relative vaccine effectiveness (VE) against infection for any COVID-19 additional primary or booster dose compared with primary series vaccination. After adjusting for calendar week and variability across SNFs, relative VE of a COVID-19 additional primary or booster dose was 46.9% (95% CI = 44.8%–48.9%). These findings indicate that among nursing home residents, COVID-19 additional primary or booster doses provide greater protection against Omicron variant infection than does primary series vaccination alone. You can learn more here: [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Public Health Impact of Coronavirus Disease Vaccines in the United States — A recent CDC study, [Public Health Impact of Coronavirus Disease Vaccines in the United States \(BMJ article\)](#), evaluated the impact of vaccine scale-up on population-level mortality and incidence in the United States. In this observational study of nearly 300 million persons and 80% of U.S. counties, higher vaccination coverage was associated with

lower rates of population-level COVID-19 mortality and incidence. Compared with largely unvaccinated counties, highly vaccinated counties had reduced mortality and cases. These data support achieving high coverage of vaccination across communities nationally. In addition, vaccines should be deployed strategically with public health and social measures based on ongoing levels of transmission.

We invite you to [read the study](#). In addition, please see the [editorial](#) from Oxford University.

For information on how to increase vaccination in your jurisdictions and communities, visit the following CDC resources:

- [12 COVID-19 Vaccination Strategies for Your Community](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccination Planning and Partnerships](#)

Counterfeit At-Home Over-the-Counter COVID-19 Diagnostic Tests — On May 5, 2022, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a [warning](#) that counterfeit at-home, over-the-counter (OTC) diagnostic tests for COVID-19 have been distributed or used in the United States. These counterfeit tests should not be used or distributed. The FDA will update [its website](#) to list counterfeit at-home OTC COVID-19 diagnostic tests to alert the public, including test users, caregivers, health care providers, and distributors, and to provide information on how to identify counterfeit tests.

Dementia Webinar: Public Health and Faith. Join the Public Health Center of Excellence on Dementia Caregiving on June 8 at 11 a.m. ET, for a panel on "Public Health and Faith" to hear how public health organizations can partner with faith organizations to support people living with dementia and their caregivers. [Register today](#).

Breaking Down Stereotypes Between Young and Old: A Creative Campus Program. [View a short QuickCast](#) about a creative engagement program designed to help organizations build positive intergenerational relationships with high school and college age students.

What's New on The Mentor's Voice. Don't miss May's episodes of [The Mentor's Voice](#), a podcast, designed for students and NextGen leaders. Listen to [Kendra Roberts, Vice President of Operations for HumanGood Affordable Housing](#).