



Nursing Home Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

May 7, 2021

Will life be “normal” by the summer? And hear from CDC about what they recommend for adults in independent living. Join us on **Monday, May 10 at 3:30 PM ET for the LeadingAge Coronavirus Update Call.** Dr. Monica Gandhi will share her latest insights on the pandemic. She always offers bold predictions and sometimes controversial viewpoints on what is coming next and we typically hear from members with comments along the lines of: “I feel so much better hearing Dr. Gandhi’s comments!”. Dr. Gandhi is a frequent commenter on COVID issues in the news; here’s a recent [interview](#) with her from KQED.

On Wednesday, May 12 at 3:30 Mary Wood of CDC will talk about working with older adults to promote safety in independent living. CDC still urges caution in many instances as we return to normal. She will have ideas and toolkits to share from the CDC as they update their [guidance](#) on this important topic. If you haven’t registered for Update Calls and wish to, you can do so [here](#)

New Telehealth Legislation Action Alert For Members. Thursday, LeadingAge national sent an action alert to all members asking them to urge Congress to support and pass key legislation that will maintain and enhance telemedicine and telehealth for providers and older adults. The past year has highlighted the value of expanded access to telehealth services and now is the time to urge Congress to support inclusion of telehealth services under Medicare. Members can take action on the alert at <https://mobilize4change.org/NfFVsqy>

Vaccinations as a condition of employment. Andrew Banoff of Jewish Senior Services joined today’s Coronavirus Update Call. As of this month, vaccination will be a condition of employment for all staff. He feels strongly that this is imperative to put the safety of clients and residents first. Read more about the logistics and consequences of his decision [here](#).

Don’t throw away extra BinaxNOW cards with an imminent expiration date - UPDATE ! We spoke to Abbott and they filed with the FDA to have a longer expiration period for all lots of tests in the field. The FDA extended the expiration date for many lots of tests! Here is a [list of lot numbers](#) for BinaxNOW cards and their new expiration date – please check your lot number.

NHSN Updates to COVID-19 Vaccine Reporting module. As we noted previously, CDC is planning to update the (currently optional) COVID-19 Vaccine Reporting module in NHSN. These updates will take place in the next week or so and updated Tables of Instructions will be available. CDC has announced a training on May 11 at 3:30pm ET to review these updates. A recording of the training will be re-broadcast 4 more times: May 18, 20, 25, and 27. Register [here](#) for the live and recorded broadcasts and remember to sign on early.

Determining Community Transmission and Associated Mitigation Levels. We have received a number of questions lately about how to determine the level of community transmission for purposes of determining when eye protection is needed. As you recall from [this guidance](#), CDC recommends wearing eye protection during patient care encounters in areas with moderate to substantial community transmission. For a description of what different levels of community transmission look like, check out Table 1 [here](#). CDC also shared with us the framework for non-COVID care [here](#). Used together and in consultation with your state/local public health, these resources may be helpful in planning “reopening” strategies, such as when and how to return to outside, non-COVID care for residents and other recovery planning.

CMS Increases Reimbursement Rate for Monoclonal Antibody Infusions. Thursday, CMS increased the rate for administering monoclonal antibodies to treat people with COVID. There is no out of pocket payment regardless of setting where the service is provided. The national average payment is increased from \$310 to \$450, with a higher rate of \$750 when monoclonal antibodies are administered in a patient’s home or temporary lodging. At the same time, CMS updated its toolkit to help providers administer monoclonal antibody treatment and other aspects of its [Monoclonal Antibody COVID-19 Infusion webpage](#).

Toolkit on State Actions to Mitigate COVID-19 Prevalence in Nursing Homes: CMS [updated a toolkit on state actions to mitigate COVID-19 prevalence in nursing homes](#). The document is a compilation of actions employed by organizations, including state governments, in the United States and outlying territories to assist nursing homes in meeting the needs of nursing home residents since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic recognized in early 2020. This compendium is not intended as guidance from CMS. It does not replace or serve as a substitute for CMS requirements and policy. The actions outlined in this document have not been evaluated for effectiveness by CMS or any government agency. This compendium is solely an informational product offered by CMS to nursing homes as well as state and local officials during the National Public Health Emergency

Fence-sitters and refusers – how best to communicate? Dr. Vish Viswanath, an expert in health communications, joined today’s Coronavirus Update Call. He indicated that people on the fence may, with the right strategies overcome their fears and concerns and get vaccinated. For people who outright refuse to be vaccinated, convincing will be much more difficult and may simply increase resistance. Read his comments [here](#).

Workforce Legislation Introduced that Invest in Direct Care Worker Career Opportunities.

Today, Education and Labor Committee Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA), Rep. Susan Wild (PA-07), and Rep. Susie Lee (NV03) introduced the [Direct Creation, Advancement, and Retention of Employment \(CARE\) Opportunity Act](#), legislation that invests more than \$1 billion over five years in training and increasing opportunities for our nation’s direct care workers. The *Direct CARE Opportunity Act* aligns with a key piece of the American Jobs Plan, which calls for significant investments to meet the surging demand for home and community-based services. The *Direct CARE Opportunity Act* strengthens the training, support, and career opportunities that direct care workers need to care for millions of older Americans and people with disabilities. An article on the *Direct CARE Opportunity Act* will be available soon.

Bills Introduced on Citizenship for Essential Workers During COVID-19. A bicameral proposal, the [Citizenship for Essential Workers Act](#) which would allow undocumented persons working as essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic to be eligible for a path to citizenship, has been introduced. The legislation (S. 747 and H.R. 1909) proposes that these workers receive permanent resident status. Individuals eligible for the adjustment of status under the legislation include those working in the nonprofit sector, or health care occupations, including home health care and residential care and home and community based services (HCBS). An article on the legislation, and other legislative proposals that address permanent path to citizenship is available here: <https://leadingage.org/legislation/bills-introduced-expedite-permanent-citizenship-essential-workers-during-covid-19>

FROM HHS:

Long-term Care Facilities: CDC [updated their information for residents of long-term care facilities \(LTCFs\)](#). LTCF residents are adults who reside in facilities that provide a range of services, including medical and personal care, to people who can't live independently. The communal nature of these facilities, which often have a population of older adults with underlying medical conditions, puts residents at increased risk. All LTCF residents are recommended to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

People with Medical Conditions: CDC [updated their guidance for people with medical conditions](#). Older adults are more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19. More than 80% of COVID-19 deaths occur in people over age 65, and more than 95% of COVID-19 deaths occur in people older than 45. Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put various groups of people at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19, including many racial and ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities. Studies have shown people from racial and ethnic minority groups are also dying from COVID-19 at younger ages. People in minority groups are often younger when they develop chronic medical conditions and may be more likely to have more than one condition. People with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities to have chronic health conditions, live in congregate setting, and face more barriers to healthcare. Studies have shown that some people with certain disabilities are more likely to get COVID-19 and have worse outcomes. CDC [also updated their information for providers](#) caring for patients with underlying medical conditions.

From Dr. Walensky:

Effectiveness of Vaccines: Earlier this week, CDC released a study examining the real-world effectiveness of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. This study looked at hospitalization rates among people over the age of 65 and found that fully vaccinated seniors were 94 percent less likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 than were those who are unvaccinated. Importantly, this study was done in a high-risk population — those over 65, who have endured a tremendous burden during this pandemic.

From Vivek Murthy:

Vaccine Confidence: Tracking vaccine confidence is nuanced, but there are two realities that remain true. First, the surveys and studies continue to show us that since the winter, a growing share of people in our country have gotten or plan to get vaccinated. We've come a long way since the end of last year. Second, we know, not only from the data, but from conversations with community members and leaders, that there are still people who have questions and want more information about vaccines. That's why we're continuing to grow the scope and reach of our COVID-19 Community Corps, which, you'll remember, is a nationwide grassroots network of health professionals; community organizations; rural, union, and faith leaders; and Americans from all walks of life who share a commitment to protecting their communities by helping people get vaccinated. The Community Corps is ultimately built on a simple but powerful idea: that protecting the nation from COVID-19 requires individuals and committees to take action, not just the government.

Combating COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy: HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) [released a recording of a panel discussing combatting COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy](#). The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an incredible threat to public health and the economy. It has also magnified the systemic health and social disparities that have long existed for ethnic and racial minority communities. A panel of BARDA experts came together to talk about the different yet significant ways they have contributed to developing medical countermeasures against COVID-19. Watch our discussion about the issues surrounding COVID-19 vaccine and treatment hesitancy -- and what it means to contribute to the pandemic response as members of one of the communities that have been disproportionately affected by this disease.

Improving Communication with Older LGBTQ+ Adults. Did you know that how you and your colleagues talk and listen to LGBTQ+ adults can have a measurable difference in the care they receive? Learn more [in this 10-minute QuickCast](#), available for free to LeadingAge members.

Building Communities of Strength: Campaign Launch. Join us throughout May as we mark Older Americans Month (OAM) and advocate for support of the aging services care infrastructure. Each May, the Administration for Community Living recognizes OAM to acknowledge the contributions of older adults. This year, the theme "Communities of Strength" is especially relevant. Join us all month and check out our [toolkit of materials and ideas](#) on how to participate.

Photo Request: Show Us YOUR Strong Communities. We are looking for photos from members that we can share throughout May. Help us showcase themes such as building endurance, overcoming challenges, and celebrating the joy in little. Photo ideas include: staff working with residents on using technology, residents participating in community programming, and reunion photos. Please send your photos to communications@leadingage.org. Thank you for your help!

Coronavirus Spotlight Podcasts. Checkout the podcast series, [LeadingAge Coronavirus Spotlights](#), featuring presentations by LeadingAge members and subject-matter experts who have been guests on our live online policy updates. Listen to these brief but informative podcasts to learn more about how your colleagues are coping with the pandemic. For the full-length audio of all the updates, visit the Online Policy Updates Archive.