



## **Nursing Home Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates**

August 27, 2021

**COVID Update Calls – how to handle breakthrough COVID cases. And, do any of us really need boosters? All update calls are at 3:30 PM, ET.** Next week, our Coronavirus calls will focus on breakthrough COVID-19 cases and expert analysis of the Delta Variant, as well as other hot topics like booster shots and what the return to schools for children means for families. On **Monday, August 30**, we will welcome fellow LeadingAge member **Barbara Thomas, CEO of Kendal at Oberlin** who will talk about her recent experience with breakthrough COVID-19 cases and the lessons learned from the experience. On **Wednesday, September 1**, **Dr. Monica Gandhi, a perennial favorite speaker on our update calls**, will outline her thinking and rationale about whether boosters are needed and provide candid advice on what is happening with COVID-19. If you haven't registered for the calls on Mondays and Wednesdays at 3:30pm ET, you can do so [here](#).

**Town Hall Summary: Member Concerns about Vaccine Mandates.** Thursday at 3:00 PM Eastern, LeadingAge hosted an all-member Town Hall to discuss the recent CMS vaccine mandate announcement, as well as LeadingAge's policy position and advocacy on the issue. A summary article of the event will be available [here](#).

**FAQs on the pending nursing home vaccine mandate:** LeadingAge has released an FAQs article related to the pending federal nursing home COVID-19 vaccine mandate. We caution that the main theme of the FAQs is that we don't know, and won't know until the rule comes out, but we share what we're thinking about in pondering these questions. We will continue to update these FAQs as more information becomes available, so the check them out [here](#) and check back regularly.

**Reminder: Register for the Nursing Home Survey Webinar.** Don't forget to register for the Nursing Home Survey Webinar! August 31st at 2pm EST. This webinar will provide an insider's perspective on nursing home regulations and answer key questions about the survey process in the wake of COVID-19. Registration and more information is available [here](#).

**National nursing homes stakeholder call with CMS and CDC:** A national nursing homes stakeholder call with CMS and CDC was held this week. CMS reiterated that while much of the upcoming vaccine mandate cannot be discussed because of the rulemaking process, they were able to clarify some questions that have been circulating, including those included in the LeadingAge FAQs, including timing of the rule's release and enforcement. CMS noted that while NHSN data indicates that vaccination is serving to protect residents during the delta surge and revision of visitation and other guidance is not indicated at this time, survey reports are showing concerning increases in other resident issues such as weight loss, loss of mobility, and increased need for assistance with ADLs.

CDC shared considerations for securing ongoing vaccination for residents and staff, including additional doses and boosters for those who are eligible. CDC encouraged nursing homes to work with long-term care pharmacy partners, pointing out that we are in a much different circumstance that when vaccines

initially rolled out in December. We now enjoy ample supply and broader community eligibility and access. Providers can consider pairing booster clinics with flu vaccine clinics, as CDC no longer discourages co-administration of the COVID-19 vaccine with other vaccinations (read all about that [here](#)). NHSN is being updated to include questions about additional COVID-19 doses.

**State Vaccination Mandates Article Updated.** We have updated this article as of August 25, 2021; states added to the list of those who have vaccination mandates for healthcare workers include Colorado, District of Columbia, Nevada, New Mexico, and North Carolina. States added to the list of those with vaccination mandate bans are Georgia and Indiana. Check out the updated [article](#) and [spreadsheet](#) for more detail.

**House-Passed Budget Resolution Paves Way for Affordable Housing, Services Investments.** The House of Representatives passed the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Resolution, which sets the stage for Congress to consider \$3.5 trillion in "care economy" infrastructure investments. Included for consideration are billions for affordable housing and home and community based services (HCBS) investments benefitting older adults. The effort could also advance key policy changes for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, which funds the majority of new affordable housing development across the country. The House committees plan to complete their work after Labor Day, which leaves only a small window for advocacy on behalf of older adults. LeadingAge is advocating for bold investments in housing, services, and other priorities, and LeadingAge members can easily add their voice during this critical time. More info [here](#).

**Possibility of COVID-19 Illness After Vaccination.** Earlier this week, CDC [updated the page on the possibility of COVID-19 illness](#) after vaccination . COVID-19 vaccines protect people against severe illness, including disease caused by Delta and other variants circulating in the U.S. COVID-19 vaccines protect people from getting infected and severely ill, and significantly reduce the likelihood of hospitalization and death.

**Hill Update: House Approves Budget Resolution, Sets Deadline for Infrastructure Vote.** Tuesday, the House advanced a budget resolution setting the stage for a \$3.5 trillion infrastructure and economic recovery package, including significant investments in aging services and affordable housing. After much internal wrangling, House Democrats united to pass the budget resolution authorizing the "care infrastructure" legislation to proceed by reconciliation (so that only 51 votes are needed in the Senate), and to set up a vote on the floor Sept. 27 on the bipartisan infrastructure legislation passed by the Senate (bricks and roads and broadband). While the House and Senate are now technically in recess until Sept. 20, critical work is still happening at the committee level. Both House and Senate committees of jurisdiction (Senate Finance, House Ways & Means, Senate Banking, House Financial Services, etc.) now must develop the legislation that the budget committees in both houses will merge into one bill; target date in the resolution is September 15. We note that the 10 moderate Democrats that wanted the vote on the Senate-passed bill to move before reconciliation was completed have also raised questions about supporting the full \$3.5T authorized by the budget resolution as have some Democratic senators despite voting to proceed using that bottom line. What this means for us is that we must continue advocating for the HCBS, nursing home and HUD housing programs and dollars we want because everything is on the table. Our advocacy priorities are available [here](#).

**Provider Relief Fund Website updates and new resources:** The Provider Relief Fund website can now be found [here](#) on the HRSA website and has been redesigned. The FAQs are now searchable but there is no longer a single document that contains all of the FAQs. In addition, HRSA has added a three new

resource guides on: [Lost Revenues, Eligible Personnel Expenses](#), and [Reporting Resources](#). Members should note that they should select their method of calculating lost revenues carefully as HRSA has clarified that the same method must be used for every reporting period. For more details on this topic and other questions LeadingAge posed to HRSA about PRF reporting, here is an [article](#) we published last week with new information from HRSA that is not in the current FAQs. Finally, providers can now [sign up](#) for a notification about future PRF payment opportunities. No word on if future payment opportunities are imminent but we can hope this is a sign of good things to come. HRSA asked that provider associations, such as LeadingAge, remind its members that the first reporting deadline is roughly one month away. First reports are due September 30 for PRF funds received between April 10 and June 30, 2020.

**Letter to the Administration on the CMS nursing home vaccine mandate announcement.** Katie Sloan sent a [letter](#) to Ambassador Susan Rice, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, and CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, outlining LeadingAge member concerns, saying all Medicare and Medicaid provider staff should be mandated to be vaccinated in all settings, and pointing out that mandating vaccines only for nursing home providers will cause workforce shortages in LTC to grow even worse.

LeadingAge requests in the letter are:

- Level the field across all of health care to keep everyone protected. The vaccine mandate as a condition of employment should apply to all health care providers that participate in Medicare or Medicaid.
- Address workforce shortages. Vaccine mandates must be coupled with direct assistance to providers, enabling them to maintain staff to keep serving and caring for residents.
- Allocate Provider Relief Funds. The remaining PRF must get to long-term care providers as quickly as possible to help ensure they can continue to serve older adults.
- Step up vaccine education. Please increase vaccine acceptance education and resources in aging services settings.

**Senior Housing Providers, Other Aging Services to Plan Booster Shot Clinics.** With the Delta variant surging in many parts of the country, booster doses of a COVID-19 vaccine may be needed to maintain strong viral protections. Subject to approval by the FDA and recommendation by CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), COVID-19 boosters will potentially be available for eligible vaccinated individuals, including health care providers, residents of long-term care communities, and other older adults. Unlike with the initial rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, CDC will NOT be coordinating clinics for booster shots; affordable senior housing providers, home and community based services providers, and other aging services providers should work with pharmacies directly to start planning shot clinics or booster shot access in the broader community for residents and staff. More info [here](#).

**Real Opportunity for Historic Federal Investment in Aging Services.** Congress is crafting the FY22 budget bill in a process called reconciliation. Under consideration are much-needed major investments for home and community-based services (HCBS) and affordable housing for older adults. We must raise our voices to ensure these allocations are included in the final bill. Please do two things this week: 1) speak out publicly, using the [tools and templates](#) LeadingAge created 2) ask others to raise their voices—share this [Action Alert](#). Members of Congress are in their home districts this week. Please let them hear your voice!

**Job Resignation in Nursing Homes During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Quality of Employer Communication.** LeadingAge’s Verena Cimarolli, Natasha Bryant, and Robyn Stone, contributed to a recent study in the *Journal of Applied Gerontology*. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the quality of employer communication related to COVID-19 and staff preparedness to care for residents can mediate the effects of COVID-19-related stressors on a nursing home employee’s decision to resign. [Read the abstract and learn more about the study.](#)

**What Can YOU Do to Resolve the LTSS Workforce Crisis?** In her [latest blog](#), LeadingAge Senior Vice President of Research Robyn Stone says success in the LTSS workforce arena depends on a variety of stakeholders—providers, policymakers, consumers and their families, professional caregivers and their associations, local businesses, educational institutions, and others. Each of us must do our part while working together toward shared goals. The blog talks about LeadingAge’s plan to address our workforce challenges, [Feeling Valued Because They ARE Valued: A Vision for Professionalizing the Caregiving Workforce in the Field of Long-Term Services and Supports.](#)

**How to Create a Culture of Belonging in Your Community.** As we strive to increase diversity in our organizations, we need to be intentional about creating a sense of belonging. Be part of our September 22 shared learning event that’s devoted to exploring ways provider organizations are creating inclusive cultures—where everyone is welcomed, valued, and respected. We’ll hear stories and examples that represent a range of approaches you can use to foster inclusion. [Register today.](#)

**Pandemic Playbook Includes New Resources on Rethinking the Future.** An important update to the [LeadingAge Pandemic Playbook](#) is now in place. “[Reopen, Recover, Reimagine: Moving Forward Together](#)” is the newly renamed and expanded chapter 9, focused not only on the present of the pandemic but also the future of member organizations. The chapter includes new resources on rebuilding occupancy and returning to stability, along with how providers are rethinking fundamental assumptions about how to serve older adults. Read the Pandemic Playbook now at [playbook.leadingage.org](#).

**Important Safety Updates for LeadingAge Annual Meeting + EXPO.** After a uniquely difficult time for our field, we are ready to welcome our community of aging services leaders back to LeadingAge Annual Meeting + EXPO—and we want to do that as safely as possible. In order to best protect our attendees, exhibitors, and event staff, all participants will be required to present proof of full vaccination against COVID-19, through a HIPAA-compliant online process. We will be making accommodations for those with religious and medical exemptions. If you have already registered for your conference badge, you will be sent an email with specific instructions in the next two weeks on how to upload your vaccine verification. For more information and the latest updates, please [visit our dedicated webpage](#). We appreciate your continued support and assistance in helping us create a safe, comfortable environment for all. If you have questions, please reach out at [sales@leadingage.org](mailto:sales@leadingage.org). We can’t wait to see you!