



## Nursing Home Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

September 24, 2021

**LeadingAge Coronavirus Update Calls:** On Monday, September 27 at 3:30pm ET, we'll talk again with Dr. Bill Mansbach about his national survey of healthcare providers levels of stress and psychological burden. He will also describe a follow up survey that will compare prior levels of stress with current levels. In addition, Dr. Mansbach and his team created a stress reduction program that has minimum burden for providers, called "15 for Me." He'll talk about this program, which can be used from cell phones and has been validated and shown to reduce stress and increase employee retention. If you haven't registered for LeadingAge Update Calls, [you can do so here](#).

**Deadline Extended to Wednesday for Workforce Survey.** Many members across the continuum have responded to the [LeadingAge Snap Survey on Staffing](#). We are extending the deadline to Wednesday, September 29 to encourage as many members as possible to take a few minutes to respond. Answers from members provide good context as we talk about the workforce situation aging services providers are facing.

**NHSN webinar:** CDC hosted a webinar on changes to NHSN. Access the slides for this presentation [here](#). The training will be replayed on Wednesday, September 29 at 1pm ET. You can register in advance for that webinar [here](#). Remember, CDC has stated that the new changes, effective October 1, will require SAMS Level 3 access. To upgrade from SAMS Level 1 access to SAMS Level 3 access, email [nhsn@cdc.gov](mailto:nhsn@cdc.gov) with "Enhancing SAMS Data Security" in the subject line, then follow the instructions [here](#).

**Nursing Home Advisory Group and Town Hall:** The Nursing Home Advisory Group will meet next Tuesday, September 28 at 2pm ET. The meeting will include a special Nursing Homes Town Hall for members to share concerns and help shape the LeadingAge Policy Priorities for 2022. Zoom info for this call is below and please feel free to share this link with interested members. If you are not currently on the mailing list for the Nursing Home Advisory Group and would like to receive future emails, please email Jodi Eyigor [jevigor@leadingage.org](mailto:jevigor@leadingage.org).

To join the Nursing Home Advisory Group and Town Hall:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83533962904?pwd=d2dBclRtYmxOVGxsK2VPenJGaXp6UT09>

Meeting ID: 835 3396 2904

Passcode: 916668

**Letter to CMS Administrator about Fire Safety Evaluation System scoring.** LeadingAge sent a [letter](#) to CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure about a serious issue related to Fire Safety Evaluation System scoring. Although we do not have an exact number, several hundred nursing homes across the country are caught in a regulatory timing problem caused by CMS. These providers were granted time-limited waivers (with absolutely no reduction in safety) until November 2021 to give CMS time to get a final regulation out. The regulation is not out and the waivers are about to expire, which potentially could cause many residents to have to move and result in millions of dollars of unnecessary expenditures.

**FROM CDC:**

1. **Upcoming webinar - What Clinicians Need to Know About the Latest CDC Recommendations for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Booster Vaccination:** [Webinar September 28, 2021 - What Clinicians Need to Know About the Latest CDC Recommendations for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Booster Vaccination](#)
2. **Immunization Program Manager Contacts** – If you are having trouble arranging COVID-19 vaccinations for residents and staff, you can contact your state or local health department’s immunization program. The appropriate contact for each immunization program can be found at this link [AIM-LTC Contact Info v.1.xlsx \(ymaws.com\)](#) *The attached PDF is this same information found in the link.* More information can be found here as well: [Immunization Program Manager Contacts - Association of Immunization Managers \(AIM\)](#)
3. **CDC vaccine access and planning resources** – Web resources for vaccine access planning developed to support long-term care settings, such as nursing homes, assisted living, residential care communities, group homes, and senior housing. Providers and jurisdictions can use these resources as they plan for and coordinate COVID-19 vaccine access for residents and staff. This includes access to COVID-19 booster doses (if approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration and recommended by CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices), as well as continued access to the primary vaccine series. There is a new webpage for LTC administrators and managers, linked below, that outlines steps to ensure LTC settings have access to vaccine. LTC providers are encouraged to consider the option that works best for their residents and staff when coordinating access to COVID-19 vaccines, either in the local community or at their facility.
  - [COVID-19 Vaccine Access in Long-term Care Settings | CDC](#)
  - [Long-term Care Administrators and Managers: Options for Coordinating Access to COVID-19 Vaccines | CDC](#)
  - [How Jurisdictions Can Ensure COVID-19 Vaccine Access for Staff and Residents in Long-term Care Settings | CDC](#)
  - [Connecting Long-term Care Settings with Federal Pharmacy Partners | CDC](#)

**New Vaccine Access Resources from CDC.** On September 21, CDC shared new vaccine access resources for variety of long-term care settings, including nursing homes, assisted living, residential care communities, group homes, and senior housing. As the FDA and CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices appear poised to recommend booster shots for people 65+ and people at high risk of becoming seriously ill from the coronavirus, aging services providers are preparing for on-site clinics and other strategies to connect older adults and eligible staff to booster shots.

The CDC’s updated website for [COVID-19 Vaccine Access in Long-term Care Settings](#) provides [information for long-term care administrators and managers](#), as well as information on [how jurisdictions can ensure COVID-19 vaccine access for staff and residents in long-term care settings](#). CDC’s new resources include strategies for on-site vaccination clinics and vaccinations in the broader community. For on-site clinics, providers are urged to contact their long-term care pharmacy, local retail pharmacy, or other vaccine provider to arrange for an on-site vaccination clinic.

Providers may also request vaccination support from a pharmacy partner enrolled in the [Federal Retail Pharmacy Program](#) and may find the CDC’s piece on [Connecting Long-Term Care Settings with Federal Pharmacy Partners](#) very useful. Providers having difficulty arranging COVID-19 vaccination for residents and staff should contact their state or local health department’s immunization program for assistance. Finally, if the state or jurisdictional immunization program is unable to connect your LTC setting with a vaccine provider, CDC is available as a safety net support and can be contacted through CDC INFO at

800-232-4636 for additional support. Aging services providers will also find the [CDC's booster shot page](#), which will be updated as the FDA and ACIP authorize booster doses, full of useful information.

**Nursing Home Vaccination Information Now on Care Compare:** Vaccination rates of nursing home residents and staff are now available on [Medicare Care Compare](#). This consumer tool is designed to provide information about vaccination rates within a nursing home and allows for comparison to other nursing homes and state and national averages. We note that the data used on the Care Compare site is the NHSN-reported data, which has been available on the [CMS COVID-19 Nursing Home Data](#) site since the reporting requirement was implemented in May 2021.

**Continuing Resolution Would Carry Programs Until December 3.** House leadership has put forth a continuing resolution (CR) that, absent final fiscal year 2022 appropriations bills, would keep the federal government open past the October 1 start of the federal fiscal year. House leadership has also paired the CR with a suspension of the statutory limit on government debt. This year, a debt ceiling suspension is opposed by Republicans. LeadingAge is advocating speedy passage of a short-term CR to avoid a government shutdown, which wreaks havoc on HUD and other annually-appropriated programs. If Congress cannot agree to a CR and there is a federal shutdown, federal agencies will implement their individual contingency plans. Agency contingency plans identify the types of activities that can take place during a shutdown. The House and Senate have until midnight on September 30 to pass a CR.

**LeadingAge Emphasizes Reconciliation Priorities to House Leadership.** On September 21, LeadingAge sent a letter to House leadership as the House finalizes the Build Back Better infrastructure reconciliation bill to be brought to the House floor as soon as the week of September 27. The letter calls out provisions critical to older adults and aging services providers from bills passed the week of September 13 by four committees as the House works to pull together its \$3.5 trillion Build Back Better package for passage. "Thank you for your leadership to make historic, structural investments for older adults and aging services providers in the Build Back Better reconciliation legislation. As the pieces of the proposal have emerged from individual House committees, we would like to highlight the investments we believe to be particularly impactful to meet the critical and pressing needs facing older adults," LeadingAge President and CEO Katie Smith Sloan says in the letter. "Older adults and aging services providers are desperate for these investments and are deeply grateful for your leadership to secure them. LeadingAge stands ready to support the funding levels reflected in the committees' bill through enactment, which cannot come soon enough." Read more in this LeadingAge [article](#).

**Senate Parliamentarian Rules Against Including Immigration Plan in Reconciliation.** On Sunday, the Senate Parliamentarian ruled against the Senate Democrats' plan to provide essential workers, DACA recipients, agricultural workers and those with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), the opportunity to apply for lawful permanent resident (LPR) status, as part of the \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation bill. This provision extends to workers who were essential workers during the pandemic, which includes health care and HCBS workers. The Parliamentarian's written guidance concludes that granting LPR status has no federal fiscal equivalent, and "changing the law to clear the way to LPR status is a tremendous and enduring policy change that dwarfs its budgetary impact."

Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and Border Safety, have prepared a stand-alone alternative proposal for the Parliamentarian's consideration that will be announced in the coming days. The House Judiciary Committee included the essential workers,

DACA, and the other categories in its portion of the Democrats' reconciliation bill that could provide up to 8 million workers permanent residency through green cards.

**Additional Details on CDC Strike Team Announcement.** As we reported on Friday, CDC announced Friday morning that they will be [investing \\$2.1 billion to protect patients and health care workers](#) from COVID and future infectious diseases. Of that total \$500 million will go directly to supporting nursing homes. Authorized in [the American Rescue Plan](#) (Sections 9402 and 9818), the funds may be used for clinical support, staffing, and infection control. We learned that many of the details are being worked out within HHS and OMB and guidance will likely be available later this month, with funds awarded in October. The funds are being awarded to state health departments through a larger cooperative agreement; the total amount of funds available to each of the jurisdictions to support these nursing home strike teams will be determined by the number of nursing homes and residents in the jurisdiction. A number of questions remain but are expected to be answered when the final language is released before the end of the month.

**Some SNFs receive a break on 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2021 QRP reporting requirements:** Skilled Nursing Facilities located in counties under a FEMA emergency disaster declaration due to Hurricane Ida will be granted an exception from the SNF Quality Reporting Program for 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021. Providers located outside the counties listed in the FEMA disaster declaration are not covered by this communication, but they may request an Extraordinary Circumstances Exception to the reporting requirements. Providers can find more details on submitting such a request in the [memo](#) announcing the reporting exceptions. While home health agencies were not specifically granted an exemption, they also can apply for one if they were impacted by Hurricane Ida.

**HRSA Stakeholder Video on Phase 4 and American Rescue Plan Rural Payments:** If you weren't able to attend last week's stakeholder call where HRSA Acting Administrator, Diana Espinosa, discussed the new round of payments, you can watch [here](#) and/or review our article on it [here](#).

**Insights From LeadingAge Partners.** LeadingAge's Corporate Alliance Program partners work with thousands of providers across the continuum of care. Join us for a free one-hour webinar on Thursday, September 30 to hear valuable insights directly from our Gold Level partners, as they share emerging trends, opportunities, and areas of collaboration within the aging services field. [Learn more and register.](#)

**Mission-Driven Aging Services Leaders Receive Top Accolades.** Three executives in aging services will be celebrated next month for their innovation, leadership, and advocacy successes at the LeadingAge Annual Meeting & EXPO at the Georgia World Congress Center. Congratulations to award winners Paul Winkler, Erica Thrash-Sall and Kristen Schulmerich. [Read the press release](#) to learn more about the winners.