



## Senior Housing Weekly

June 3, 2022

**LeadingAge Housing Network Call.** Join us on Monday, June 6, at 12:30pm ET for our regular Housing Network call featuring updates on HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) for PRAC. During the call, LeadingAge will provide [exciting updates about the RAD for PRAC preservation tool](#), and then we will hear from LeadingAge members who have gone through the conversion process. We will also review the insurance call that LeadingAge hosted last week and provide general affordable senior housing updates. Any LeadingAge member can join the Housing Network or submit advance questions by emailing Linda ([lcouch@leadingage.org](mailto:lcouch@leadingage.org)) or Juliana ([jbilowich@leadingage.org](mailto:jbilowich@leadingage.org)).

**LeadingAge Coronavirus Update Call on Monday.** With deaths among people over age 65 as a percentage of total deaths on the rise again this year and with cases increasing and surges anticipated, it is important to consider the different symptoms and health outcomes for older adults. **On Monday June 6 at 3:30 PM Eastern**, hear from Dr. Elizabeth Goldberg, a geriatrician and clinical researcher at Brown University. She'll discuss her study, published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, on the different symptoms and impact of COVID on older people compared to younger people. She'll offer LeadingAge providers specific guidance on what to watch for with new variants and how prevention and treatment should be framed to best serve older adults. 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.

**LeadingAge Hosts Call with HUD, Insurance, and Housing Stakeholders on Insurance Rates in Affordable Senior Housing.** This week, LeadingAge hosted its second call to discuss rising property and liability insurance costs for affordable housing communities. Many LeadingAge members report significant increases in insurance costs in the past year, paired with decreases in coverage and general trends toward "uninsurability." During the call, HUD, housing providers, and insurance industry representatives shared their perspectives and brainstormed possible solutions; subject matter experts on the call also warned against possible Fair Housing Act violations related to the disparate impact of increased insurance rates for HUD-assisted properties vs. comparable non-HUD assisted properties. Materials from the call are available [here](#).

**HUD Launches "Our Way Home" Initiative to Increase Affordable Housing Supply in Local Communities.** This week, HUD launched the [Our Way Home initiative](#), a new effort to leverage existing funds to boost the nation's affordable housing supply. The national initiative aims to uplift housing supply successes in local communities and connect cities, counties, tribal communities, states, and U.S. territories to tools and resources needed to preserve and produce affordable housing. During a day of action held this week, HUD Secretary Fudge, Deputy Secretary Todman, and HUD's Regional Administrators held events throughout the country to recognize the launch and engage with local and state leadership. On a call this week with LeadingAge and other housing stakeholders, HUD leadership reviewed the initiative, which builds on the Biden-Harris Administration's recently announced Housing

Supply Action Plan; the Administration's plan aims to close the housing supply gap within the next five years. More information is available [here](#).

**HUD Survey of 2,024 Communities with Section 232 Loans.** HUD's Office of the Inspector General has posted a survey it conducted of all 2,042 nursing homes in the Section 232 program to assess COVID impact on financial health. Section 232 is an FHA mortgage insurance program that insures HUD-approved lenders against financial loss from mortgage defaults through HUD's Office of Residential Care Facilities (ORCF). Section 232 mortgage insurance is available on mortgages that finance residential healthcare communities, such as nursing homes, assisted living, and board and care communities. The HUD OIG's memo describing the survey also describes Congressional efforts to protect these types of communities from financial distress. These efforts included the Paycheck Protection Program, the Provider Relief Fund, and statutory authority for ORCF to insure operating loss loans under Section 223(d) of the National Housing Act to mitigate healthcare communities' COVID-19-related temporary revenue reductions as well as flexibility for the use of the reserve for replacement account. "Responsive owners stated that nursing homes experienced significant challenges to their operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges included staffing shortages; COVID-19 infections in residents and staff; large fluctuations in bed vacancies; rising operating costs; and difficulties in responding to local, State, and Federal Government requirements. Nursing home owners utilized multiple State and Federal relief programs as well as other funding sources. However, few nursing home owners used their reserve for replacement funds or HUD's operating loss loan program to assist with operational expenses," the OIG says. See the full OIG memorandum [here](#).

**White House Releases Mental Health Fact Sheet:** The White House released a [fact sheet](#) on all of the Administration's efforts to date on their strategy to address the National Mental Health Crisis.

**HHS Launches Office of Environmental Justice.** This week the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [launched](#) an Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) to better protect the health of disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations on the frontlines of pollution and other environmental health issues. The new office is [seeking public comment](#) on a draft outline of the 2022 HHS Environmental Justice Strategy and Implementation Plan by June 18, 2022. The OEJ is tasked with:

- Leading initiatives that integrate environmental justice into the HHS mission to improve health in disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations across the nation.
- Developing and implementing an HHS-wide strategy on environmental justice and health.
- Coordinating annual HHS environmental justice reports.
- Providing HHS' Office of Civil Rights with environmental justice expertise to support compliance under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- Promoting training opportunities to build an environmental justice workforce.

**COVID-19 Funding Action Alert.** Congress Must Pass New COVID-19 Funding Now! With COVID-19 cases, test positivity rates, and hospitalizations again on the rise, the country is not past the pandemic. Now is the time to ask Congress to fully fund additional support for the nation's ongoing efforts to fight COVID-19—especially for older adults who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Experts are predicting new surges in the late Summer and Fall but additional funding is needed to make sure the country has enough vaccines, boosters, tests, and treatments to meet projected needs. We know the tools we need to confront COVID-19; Congress must act now so communities across the nation are prepared to deal with the coming surges.

We must ensure that test kits and testing locations remain available and accessible to everyone who needs them and that vaccines (including boosters) are readily available and robustly promoted. Treatments and therapeutics must also be easy to find and access, while research to find new tests, vaccines, and treatments continue.

Please take two minutes to write to your members of Congress now and advocate for more COVID-19 relief.

Link: <https://www.votervoice.net/LeadingAge/campaigns/94910/respond> Thank you!

**Congressional Update.** Although the House and Senate are in recess this week, there's no shortage of work left to be done before Congress adjourns ahead of the midterm elections. What began as the Build Back Better plan is now being reshaped into a much narrower, inflation-fighting measure that would amount to a fraction of the spending in the original bill. According to recent reporting, the new framework being discussed by the Administration and Congressional leaders would raise about \$1 trillion in revenue and spend roughly \$500 billion over the next decade, with the remainder of the new revenue being applied to reduce the deficit. Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who brought a halt to the measure back in December, has been discussing a revised bill with Majority Leader Chuck Schumer from New York. This new framework would focus on clean energy tax credits, higher taxes on the wealthy, as well as provisions to lower prescription drug costs that could potentially include authorizing Medicare to negotiate drug prices, capping insulin costs at \$35 per month, and allowing the importation of drugs from Canada.

The latest news out of Congress on COVID funding is that the \$10 billion agreement will need to be renegotiated because some of the money designated to pay for it has already been spent. Dr. Cameron Webb, a member of the White House's COVID-19 Task Force, made it clear this week just how important additional COVID funding will be, particularly if we want to be at the front of the line to procure the latest vaccines in the pipeline, not to mention more testing, PPE, and therapeutics like Paxlovid. As House and Senate leaders try to forge a path forward on a revised agreement, we will keep you up to date on the latest developments.

**Senators Release Draft Mental Health Care Telehealth Proposal.** Four Senators on the Senate Finance Committee released a bipartisan discussion draft, as part of the committee's ongoing work to advance legislation that strengthens mental health care across the nation. The discussion draft, "[Telemental Health Access to Care Act](#)," sponsored by Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR), Ranking Member Mike Crapo (R-ID), Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Senator John Thune (R-SD), includes a public call for comments. The policies would:

- Remove Medicare’s in-person visit requirement for telemental health services.
- Establish benefit transparency for mental health care services delivered through telehealth to inform Americans with Medicare how and when they can access telehealth.
- Preserve access to audio-only mental health coverage in Medicare, when necessary and appropriate. Also, require the National Academy of Medicine to conduct an evaluation and submit a report on mental health services furnished via audio-only telecommunications systems, within 5 years after enactment.
- Direct Medicare and Medicaid to promote and support provider use of telehealth.
- Incentivize states to use their Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) programs to establish and improve in-person and virtual mental health care services in schools.

Ranking Member Crapo emphasized in the Finance Committee’s [press release](#), “The Finance Committee took crucial first steps toward modernizing telehealth coverage for mental health services in late 2020, and I look forward to building on those efforts through this bipartisan process.” The committee’s five areas of focus for addressing shortfalls in mental health care include: workforce, care integration, mental health parity, telehealth and youth.