



Senior Housing Weekly

July 8, 2022

LeadingAge Housing Network Call to Feature FY23 HUD Budget Updates, LGBTQ+ Housing Training Options, Build America Preference Discussion. Join our regular Housing Network call this Monday, June 27 at 12:30pm ET, for a focused call on HUD's new physical inspection protocol. This focused edition of our regular Housing Network call will feature a deep dive into HUD's [proposed changes under NSPIRE](#), including adjusted and newly-established standards for physical property inspections within HUD's portfolio. HUD is currently accepting public comment on the proposed changes, and you can help weigh in on LeadingAge's response during Monday's call. We'll also review LeadingAge's draft comments on HUD's implementation of the new [Buy America Preference](#) (domestic procurement). Any LeadingAge member can join the Housing Network calls; reach out to Linda, lcouch@leadingage.org, or Juliana, jbilowich@leadingage.org.

Coronavirus Update Calls for Week of July 11. On **Monday, July 11, at 3:30pm ET**, we will welcome back aging services economist Howard Gleckman from the Urban Institute, who will talk about the issues laid bare by COVID-19 and provide insights on how we can create the aging services infrastructure of the future. On **Wednesday, July 13, at 3:30pm ET**, we will welcome Dr. Vito Ilacqua from the Indoor Environments Division of the Environmental Protection Agency to discuss how proper ventilation and HVAC systems can help mitigate COVID-19 transmission and create healthier and safer environments. 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.

HUD Service Coordinator Grants Delayed Until August. HUD has let LeadingAge and housing providers know that annual Service Coordinator grants are experiencing additional delays for Calendar Year 2022. Originally expected to be delayed until May, Notices of Award for HUD-funded Resident Service Coordinator grants are now expected to go out to properties in August. Once the Award Notices are accepted by the grantees, HUD will need to take additional steps to disburse the grant funds, adding to the funding delays. Properties with access to Reserve for Replacement accounts can continue to access reserves to cover the cost of the Service Coordinator programs until the grants are paid out. LeadingAge will continue to work with Congress to find a solution for HUD's grant administration delays, and we urge providers to get HUD approval to work Service Coordinators into the budget where possible. More information is available [here](#).

CSP Eligibility: Making the Case for Back-Up Generators in HUD-Assisted Senior Housing. LeadingAge has made a new resource available for helping housing providers navigate back-up generator installation reimbursement through the next round of HUD COVID-19 Supplemental Payments (CSPs), which is expected this summer. Review the expected eligibility requirements – and information about how to make the case for expanded eligibility – in the resource document [here](#).

Backgrounder: Using HUD Project-Based Vouchers to pay for the housing component in Assisted Living. This new three-page LeadingAge backgrounder reviews the use of HUD Project-Based Vouchers in assisted living communities. Public housing authorities can enter into contracts with assisted living owners and agree to provide rental subsidy through project-based vouchers to a certain number of units for a set amount of time. When someone moves from a project-based voucher apartment, the project-based voucher stays with the apartment. Project-based vouchers can be “stuck” to units in assisted living communities to cover shelter costs, offering affordability to residents and steady rental income to owners. Read [the new backgrounder](#) for more information.

DEADLINE EXTENDED: HUD Requests Input on New Buy America Preference for Housing Infrastructure. As the federal government rolls out its new "Buy America Preference" across federal agencies, LeadingAge is advocating with HUD for waivers and flexibilities for affordable senior housing projects. Starting in November 2022, the Buy America Preference would apply to new Section 202 awardees and other HUD recipients engaged in infrastructure projects, including the construction and rehabilitation of HUD-assisted housing. In a recent listening session with HUD, LeadingAge expressed concerns about the potential negative impacts of the new BAP on next round Section 202 Capital Advance projects, on COVID-19 Supplemental Payment capital projects, and in general, the impacts on CDBG and HOME projects. Many Section 202 current round awardees are struggling with construction cost increases and supply chain disruptions. The comment period in the Federal Register has been extended to July 15, 2022. LeadingAge is working with members to compile feedback for the agency. Any questions or comments on HUD’s [Request for Information](#) can be sent to Juliana (jbilowich@leadingage.org). More information is available [here](#).

Still Time to Weigh In: LeadingAge Compiles Additional Feedback to HUD on NSPIRE. HUD is requesting additional public comment on the agency's implementation of the National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate, or NSPIRE, which will replace REAC's current inspection protocol as early as next year. Comments are due to HUD by August 1 on a number of [key questions](#) about new and changed standards; HUD will then consider the public feedback before publishing a final notice of new standards in the Federal Register. LeadingAge has worked closely with HUD and with our membership to help develop a robust yet feasible oversight mechanism for the affordable housing portfolio; to assist LeadingAge in submitting feedback to HUD, email Juliana (jbilowich@leadingage.org). More information is available [here](#).

FHA Flexibilities on Employment Gaps for Mortgage Lending. On July 7, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) announced new flexibility for lenders when qualifying borrowers who experienced previous employment gaps or loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through updates contained in [Mortgagee Letter 2022-09](#), salaried and hourly wage-earners, as well as self-employed individuals affected by COVID-19, who now have stable income will have a greater opportunity to purchase a home using affordable FHA-insured mortgage financing. LeadingAge is interested in ways to increase homeownership opportunities particularly among workers of color because the Black / White homeownership gap, of 30%, contributes to households not having home equity to tap into for services and caregiving as they age.

Diverse Elders has launched a new [website](#) featuring updated information on their trainings, including the Caring for Those Who Care curriculum, which is a resource for aging professionals to learn about the unique needs of diverse family caregivers. The training curriculum will equip professionals with insights into the lived experiences of the following populations: African American and Black Caregivers, American Indian and Alaska Native Caregivers, Chinese American and Korean American Caregivers, Hispanic and Latino Caregivers, LGBTQ+ Caregivers, and Southeast Asian American Caregivers.

Congressional Update. This week, Senate Democrats released [legislative text](#) detailing their [updated drug pricing plan](#) in order to revive the reconciliation bill that fell apart last year. The proposal is being sent to the parliamentarian to ensure it follows the Senate's rules on reconciliation, and largely mirrors the agreement forged on drug pricing in November. However, some changes have been made to the proposal. Medicare drug negotiations begin in 2023, rather than 2024, and negotiated prices take effect in 2026 instead of 2025. The new bill also allows for a delay in negotiations for biosimilar drugs "for up to two years, if a biosimilar demonstrates a high likelihood of entering the market before the negotiated price would take effect." Further, while the new text maintains the provisions that cap seniors' drug costs under Medicare at \$2,000 each year, it broadens the Part D low-income subsidy eligibility from 135% to 150% of the federal poverty level, and it modifies the premium stabilization portion of the bill. The bill also no longer includes a \$35 monthly cap on insulin costs for Medicare patients. Instead, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) has signaled that he wants to bring a more comprehensive, bipartisan insulin bill from Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Susan Collins (R-ME) to the floor for a vote. Senator Schumer's decision to continue negotiating with Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) to craft a reconciliation package has thrown a possible wrench into bipartisan, bicameral negotiations on the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act (USICA), legislation to boost domestic semiconductor manufacturing and U.S. competitiveness. In fact, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell vowed to stop USICA in its tracks if Schumer pushes a partisan reconciliation package. So, what does the path forward look like from here? Will USICA take a back seat to the reconciliation package? Will both bills make it to the finish line independently? Or, will a scaled back version of USICA be incorporated into the reconciliation bill to create a larger "economic" package. Regardless of the outcome, July will be an interesting month in Congress so stay tuned for additional updates!

Another LeadingAge Workforce Win. House Appropriators Urge HRSA to Address Older Adults

Workforce Shortages The House Appropriations Committee passed the fiscal year (FY) Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill on June 30, 2022. The bill includes several wins for LeadingAge, that would help to increase the nation's aging services workforce. The bill allocates funding for several federal programs that are of interest to LeadingAge and are highlighted in an article [here](#). Among other things, the bill includes: nearly \$2 billion in new money for the Department of Labor, including for apprenticeship programs, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity state grants, and Senior Community Service Employment; \$15,6 billion in new money for HHS to enhance nursing workforce development and other health care programs; and enhanced funding for targeted programs of the Administration on Community Living. The Committee also adopted [a manager's amendment from House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro](#) (D-CT), that added language to the committee report that urges the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to "address the skilled care workforce needs of seniors through existing workforce education and training programs."

According to the committee report, “the Committee supports HRSA’s efforts to develop the workforce needed to care for a rapidly aging U.S. population. The Committee report encourages HRSA to address the skilled care workforce needs of seniors through existing workforce education and training programs.” This language was added as a new paragraph after the “Grant-Based Program to Include Disability Clinical Care Competency Training Program,” that would be developed in collaboration with the National Council on Disability, community-based organizations, health professions schools and minority health and public health and disability groups, and several other entities. Additionally,, the committee report requires a HRSA report and analysis of technology’s role in the public health care workforce. The House of Representatives is expected to vote on the Labor-HHS appropriations bill after the July recess.

Telehealth during the pandemic: Fair Health recently released an issue brief looking at [“The Evolution of Telehealth during the COVID-19 Pandemic”](#) utilizing data from their [Monthly Telehealth Regional Tracker](#). Many changes in telehealth utilization were likely related to the course of the pandemic. For 6 of the 12 months of 2021, telehealth utilization fell from the level of utilization in the prior month. Nevertheless, it remained much higher than before the pandemic. For example, in spring and summer 2021, telehealth claim lines dropped as vaccination levels increased. In fall and winter 2021, however, telehealth utilization rose again as the Delta and Omicron variants led to increased COVID-19 cases. The brief also notes that mental health conditions have been the most common telehealth diagnosis nationally throughout the pandemic.

COVID was the third leading cause of death in the US in both 2020 and 2021. A study conducted by researchers at the National Cancer Institute and published today in [JAMA Internal Medicine](#) found that COVID accounted for 1 in every 8 deaths between March 2020 and October 2021. Interestingly, in 2020, COVID was the second leading cause of death in 2020, but fell to third in 2021; the researchers opined that targeted vaccinations in this age group caused the change. The researchers also found that the pandemic indirectly caused increased deaths during the study period from other causes such as heart disease, accidents, stroke, Alzheimer’s disease and diabetes, possibly because people were reluctant or unable to seek medical care. The NCI researchers also suggest that cancer deaths may increase in the future as a result of individuals skipping preventive screenings during the pandemic.