



Senior Housing Weekly

September 10, 2021

Staffing Challenges and Success at Affordable Housing Communities. Join us for our next Housing Advisory Group call on Monday, September 13, for a discussion on staffing issues in affordable housing communities. Based on the results of a LeadingAge survey, we'll discuss the number and types of positions that housing communities employ, HUD support for staffing, recruitment and retention issues, training, and salaries. LeadingAge hosts Housing Advisory Group calls every Monday at 12:30pm ET, and any LeadingAge member can join. Email Linda (LCouch@leadingage.org) or Juliana (JBilowich@leadingage.org) to learn more.

What's going on with breakthrough infections? Is the number of infections going up? is it higher in congregate living settings for older people? Join us for the LeadingAge Coronavirus Update call at **3:30 on Monday, September 13** as we talk with **Dr. Robert Wachter of the University of California, San Francisco** about these questions. Dr. Wachter told the New York Times a few weeks ago "remember when the early vaccine studies came out, it was like nobody was hospitalized, nobody died? That clearly is not true....The case for boosters goes up pretty quickly."

Has your community noticed a change in resident attitudes toward and treatment of staff, as the pandemic wears on and with staffing shortages so common? Peter Sullivan of member organization Birch Bay Village will join the Update Call at **3:30 on Wednesday, September 15** to talk about strategies for creating and maintaining a culture of respect and caring between residents and staff, even in these tough times. If you haven't registered for LeadingAge Update Calls, [you can do so here](#).

Some Housing Details Revealed for Infrastructure Package. The House Financial Services committee, the Committee tasked with determining the affordable housing portions of the House's \$3.5 trillion infrastructure reconciliation package, has released funding levels for housing programs that the Committee will vote on as early as September 13. In total, the Financial Services Committee plans to provide \$322 billion for affordable housing programs, including \$2.5 billion for the Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program. A \$2.5 billion injection of new 202 dollars could result in 25,000 new Section 202 homes. Or, it could result in almost 20,000 new Section 202 homes as well as more than 2000 new Service Coordinators to fill the gap of affordable senior housing communities currently without one. It could also include funding for a housing and services technical assistance for states, which HUD has been championing with support from LeadingAge and others. For now, however, we know funding levels provided in the bill. For multifamily housing including the Section 202 program, the bill includes \$10 million for greening, retrofitting, and preservation. The housing bill also includes major investments, in a variety of HUD and USDA programs, including the national Housing Trust Fund, public housing, the HOME program and vouchers.

House Financial Services Committee Reconciliation Bill = 37,500 new Section 202 homes. Additional details emerged on September 9 as the House Committee on Financial Services released its bill text for the housing portion of the House's \$3.5 trillion investment bill. According to the Committee, the \$2.5 billion the bill provides for new Section 202 homes could result in 37,500 new Section 202 homes. The bill also includes \$15 billion in the first Project-Based Rental Assistance contracts in almost 40 years,

enough to assist 260,000 new PBRA homes. Read more about the bill, which is scheduled for a Committee vote on September 13, [here](#).

HUD Announces Eviction Prevention Efforts. HUD announced in a press release that it intends to take action to promote housing stability following the [Supreme Court's recent invalidation of the CDC's eviction moratorium](#). According to the announcement, "HUD will act to require public housing authorities and owners participating in HUD's project-based rental assistance program to provide tenants facing eviction for non-payment of rent with additional time and other protections to allow them the opportunity to secure emergency rental assistance that may stave off eviction entirely." Specifically, the press release states that "for the duration of the presidentially-declared national emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic, HUD will extend the time its programmatic regulations require before a tenant must vacate a unit once a notice of lease termination for non-payment has been issued from 14 days to 30 days, consistent with CARES Act protections and the protections already in place for FHA-insured Multifamily mortgages where the borrower is under a forbearance agreement." The agency may also require additional steps of landlords seeking to initiate an eviction. Formal HUD guidance has not yet been released by the agency; LeadingAge's one-pager on eviction prevention is available [here](#). Yesterday, [legislation](#) was introduced in the House to make improvements to Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance program, including allowing landlords to access ERA funds without the consent of the tenant. A hearing on the bill is set for September 10.

"It's not just the buildings; it's the people served." Richard Cho, Senior Advisor, Housing and Services, and Ethan Handelman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Multifamily Housing, US Department of Housing and Urban Development joined us for the LeadingAge Update Call on September 8. [Here](#) is an article detailing their comments on HUD's role throughout the pandemic, the President's Build Back Better agenda, housing plus services, service coordinators and internet access. In all of their answers, the message they brought from Secretary Fudge is that the administration is taking an all-department approach to addressing government programs and government solutions to challenges people face. Regarding booster clinics in housing sites, Richard suggested that housing providers could contact their HUD field office for assistance with vaccination connections.

New White House Plan: Expanded Vaccine Mandates, Boosters, Testing, Provider Help. On September 9, the White House released a six-pronged new plan, "Path Out of the Pandemic." The plan includes a much broader vaccine mandate for CMS-regulated entities, which LeadingAge has urged. CMS will expand its mandate beyond CMS-regulated nursing home staff to include workers in most health care settings that receive Medicare or Medicaid reimbursement, including but not limited to hospitals, dialysis facilities, ambulatory surgical settings, and home health agencies. In addition, OSHA is developing a rule that will require all employers with 100 or more employees to ensure their workforce is fully vaccinated or require any workers who remain unvaccinated to produce a negative test result on at least a weekly basis before coming to work. Other pieces of the plan include greater testing access, readying a booster roll-out, and improvements to the Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loan programs. See this [article](#) with more information.

Experience implementing vaccine mandates. With the White House September 9 announcements, more and more LeadingAge members will be faced with implementing vaccine mandates. This [short article](#) summarizing our September 9 webinar sharing the experience of three members who are

implementing staff vaccine requirements in regions with high levels of resistance. It covers how the speakers made the decision to require vaccinations, communication, resistance, exemptions, and thoughts about testing as an alternative. Here is [a link to the recording](#) of the webinar.

Energy and Commerce Committee Unveils HCBS Reconciliation Proposal. Democrats on the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee unveiled its portion of the *Build Back Better Act* and highlighted what should be included in the \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation package that’s being negotiated in Congress. The E&C Committee’s Fact Sheet on Key Provisions of the *Build Back Better Act* reflects historic investments in middle class families, workers, and opportunities for making health care more affordable. Legislative text has not been unveiled, and it’s likely to be available prior to Monday’s full committee mark-up. The Fact Sheet indicates the bill will allocate \$190 billion to expand access to home and community-based services (HCBS) for older adults and people with disabilities, as specified in the *Better Care Better Jobs Act (S. 2210/H.R. 4131)*. This is less than half of the \$400 billion investment President Biden, Senate Democrats and LeadingAge have called for that should be designated to a “HCBS care infrastructure” investment. However, it is more than many observers expected.

The *Better Care Better Jobs Act* requires states to develop “HCBS infrastructure improvement plans” by providing a permanent 10 percentage-point increase in the federal matching rates. It would also strengthen the direct care workforce recruitment and retention by improving provider payment rates and giving states the resources to ensure the rate increases are passed through to workers’ wages.

The E&C’s Committee’s Fact Sheet indicates the bill also makes permanent the Money Follows the Person and the spousal impoverishment program. Additionally, the bill would:

- Permanently lower prescription drug prices, and require HHS to annually negotiate with drug manufacturers;
- Add a new comprehensive dental, vision and hearing benefits to Medicare;
- Invest \$35 billion to rebuild public health departments, and the modernization of health care facilities; and expand capacity for training primary health care providers; and
- Close the Medicaid coverage gap, to allow up to 4 million uninsured Americans to gain access to coverage.

COVID-19 Infected Many More Americans in 2020 than Official Tallies Show: NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins [commented on a recent article published in Nature](#), which offers a more-comprehensive estimate that puts the true number of COVID-19 infections by the end of 2020 at more than 100 million. That’s equal to just under a third of the U.S. population of 328 million. This revised number shows just how rapidly this novel coronavirus spread through the country last year. It also brings home just how timely the vaccines have been—and continue to be in 2021—to protect our nation’s health in this time of pandemic. From these data, the researchers calculated that only about 11 percent of all COVID-19 cases were confirmed by a positive test result in March 2020. By the end of the year, with testing improvements and heightened public awareness of COVID-19, the ascertainment rate (the number of infections that were known versus unknown) rose to about 25 percent on average. This measure also varied a lot across the country.

COVID Data Tracker Weekly Review: On Friday, CDC [released their weekly review](#) from the COVID Data Tracker. A recent [CDC study](#) shows that the [Delta variant](#) can spread rapidly in schools when unvaccinated teachers and staff have close, indoor contact with unvaccinated children. While children have been less affected by COVID-19 compared with adults, they can get sick with COVID-19 and can [spread](#) it to others. A second [CDC study](#) shows that rates of COVID-19-associated hospitalizations in children and adolescents increased following the rise of the Delta variant in the United States. [Prevention strategies](#), including [vaccination](#) of school staff and eligible students, [universal indoor masking](#), staying home when sick, and [routine testing](#), are critical to schools reopening and operating safely.