

Highlights for LPCs:

- 1. Follow up from Previous Update Call; One Member's Vaccine Mandate Communication Tools.** In response to member inquiry and following his appearance on our daily call, Mark Beggs, CEO of [Edenwald Senior Living](#) (Townson, MD) has made available the six communication tools he created to institute a staff vaccine mandate in his community. These include a [first](#) and [second](#) email announcement; an email announcement for a [staff discussion](#); a [mandate policy](#); and [religious exemption](#) and [request for medical accommodation](#) forms. He has given permission to share these resources and they are intended as helpful member to member templates only. Note, these are not created by LeadingAge; they are one member's materials.
- 2. Choose Home proposal presents opportunities for providers across the continuum.** [Here](#) is a brief explanation of the Choose Home Act, which was introduced in the Senate last week. In addition to providing opportunities for Home Health members of LeadingAge, it is likely that if it were enacted, the program would serve residents of assisted living, affordable housing, and other residential settings through partnerships. Choose Home could offer Medicare beneficiaries increased choices and tighten the safety net for older adults as they leave the hospital.
- 3. SBA Direct Forgiveness Portal Open.** For those who took Paycheck Protection Loans of less than 150k, you can apply to work with the SBA directly on forgiveness rather than going through your lender at <https://directforgiveness.sba.gov/requests/borrower/login/?next=/>
- 4. ACL/HHS Webinar on Dealing with Major Disasters.** ACL announced that it is partnering with FEMA to offer the "Ready Seniors Webinar Series," beginning with a webinar on Wednesday August 25 from 1:00 – 4:00 PM ET. Recommended for emergency planners for nursing homes, assisted living, senior centers, senior housing, adult day programs, and others who serve older people, the workshop aims to prepare organizations that provide critical support to older people during a major disaster (fires, hurricanes, etc.) in their community. Information and registration details are [here](#).
- 5. Upcoming Update Calls. More analyses of what's going on with Delta and what it means for aging services providers and a provider who dealt with a small breakthrough cluster. All calls are at 3:30 PM Eastern. On Monday, August 9, Dr. David Dowdy** of Johns Hopkins University will join the call. He's frequently quoted in the national media and will discuss breakthrough infections and how to prevent them, as well as share modeling on the surge and talk about who is getting sick and how sick they are getting. **On Wednesday, August 11,** we will talk with **Courtney Wood** from Masonicare in Connecticut. The organization had a small cluster of breakthrough infections in vaccinated residents. Courtney will talk with us about the experience and describe how the organization dealt with it. We hope her experience will help other members think about the steps they need to take to be ready for the possibility of breakthrough infections in terms of communication with residents, staff, and family members, as well as

clinical steps and regulatory and reporting considerations. If you haven't registered for the calls, [you can do so here.](#)

COVID-19 Related Updates:

1. **Outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 Infections, Including COVID-19 Vaccine Breakthrough Infections, Associated with Large Public Gatherings:** CDC released an MMWR on [the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 infections, including COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough infections, associated with large public gatherings](#) in Barnstable County, Massachusetts in July, 2021. Variants of SARS-CoV-2 continue to emerge. The B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant is highly transmissible. In July 2021, following multiple large public events in a Barnstable County, Massachusetts, town, 469 COVID-19 cases were identified among Massachusetts residents who had traveled to the town during July 3–17; 346 (74%) occurred in fully vaccinated persons. Testing identified the Delta variant in 90% of specimens from 133 patients. Cycle threshold values were similar among specimens from patients who were fully vaccinated and those who were not. Jurisdictions might consider expanded prevention strategies, including universal masking in indoor public settings, particularly for large public gatherings that include travelers from many areas with differing levels of SARS-CoV-2 transmission. CDC Director Rachele Walensky, MD, MPH, released an accompanying statement on the MMWR.
2. **Update on Employee Leave Provisions During COVID.** As COVID case numbers surge dramatically, LeadingAge members have asked for an update on employee leave provisions, in case staff test positive, have a family member who tests positive or is ill, or have to miss work for other reasons related to COVID. Here's a quick review of the state of the play with employee leave provisions, including those expired, soon to expire, and still in effect.
 - a. Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)
 - i. The FFCRA was enacted in March 2020. The FFCRA required mandatory paid leave (Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act and Emergency Family Medical Leave Extension Act) for employees related to COVID-19. The provisions applied to employers with 500 or fewer employees
 - ii. The FFCRA leave provisions were structured as a refundable tax credits for employers to cover 2 weeks of sick leave and up to 10 weeks of Emergency Family Medical Leave. There were six qualifying conditions for this leave.
 - iii. The FFCRA leave provisions **expired** on December 31, 2020
 - b. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
 - i. Effective April 1, 2021, the ARPA extended the tax credits available under FFCRA on a **voluntary** basis for qualifying events. This extension also added three additional qualifying conditions for the leave provisions. See the [IRS guidance and overview](#) of the ARPA for more details.
 - ii. These leave benefits and tax credits were **extended through September 20, 2021.**
 - c. Occupational Safety and Health Administration Emergency Temporary Standard (OSHA ETS) - Medical Removal Protection Benefits

- i. Under the [OSHA ETS for healthcare settings](#) providers must pay regular pay and benefits, up to \$1,400 per week, for employees that miss work due to a COVID-19 diagnosis or known exposure to those with COVID-19.
 - ii. This ETS applies to healthcare settings with more than 10 employees. The medical removal benefit applies unless the employee meets return to work criteria or refuses to be tested for COVID-19. For employers with less than 500 employees, that amount is reduced beginning in the third week of removal to two-thirds of the regular pay and benefits, up to \$200 per day
 - iii. Providers may require use of paid sick leave, PTO, or other applicable leave under your policies and procedures.
 - iv. Employers must provide “reasonable time and paid leave” to any employee who receives a COVID-19 vaccine and/or experiences side effects following vaccination. The ETS does not define or give examples of “reasonable time or paid leave”

- 3. **HHS Webinar on monoclonal antibodies.** Please join an important webinar NEXT TUESDAY focusing on how monoclonal antibodies and other therapeutics can help prevent serious illness from COVID-19. This webinar will feature Michael R. Anderson, MD, a Senior Advisor to HHS’ Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR). Dr. Anderson will share updates on available COVID-19 therapeutics including medication efficacy, new administration routes and novel treatments in the pipeline, fee reimbursement resources, and provider and patient tools and fact sheets. Dr. Anderson and HRSA representatives will also be available for a Q&A to answer providers’ questions about these important COVID-19 therapies.
 - The Critical Role of Monoclonal Antibodies as the COVID-19 Pandemic Continues**
 - Tuesday, August 10
 - 4:00-5:00 p.m. ET
 - [Join the day of the session](#)
 - If you prefer to join by phone: 833-568-8864
 - When prompted, enter meeting/webinar ID: 160 055 0780 and passcode: 828587

- 4. **To Enable More Vaccinations, Treasury Expands Paid Leave Tax Credit:** The Department of Treasury [released information on an expansion of the Paid Leave Tax Credit](#). Eligible employers can claim tax credits equal to the wages paid for providing paid time-off to employees to take a family or household member or certain other individuals to get vaccinated, or to care for a family or household member or certain other individuals recovering from the vaccination. Comparable tax credits are also available for self-employed individuals.

- 5. **Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace:** OSHA updated [guidance on mitigating and preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace](#). This guidance is intended to help employers and workers not covered by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) to identify COVID-19 exposure risks to workers who are unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk, and to help them take appropriate steps to prevent exposure and infection.

- 6. **CDC Extends Eviction Moratorium in High Transmission Counties.** Today, the CDC issued a new Order temporarily halting evictions in counties with heightened levels of community transmission “in order to respond to recent, unexpected developments in the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the rise of the Delta variant.” The Order is intended to target

specific areas of the country where cases are rapidly increasing, which likely would be exacerbated by mass evictions. Landlords and owners may not evict covered individuals (people who declare under penalty of perjury they meet six threshold requirements, including having made “best efforts to obtain all available government assistance for rent or housing”) in counties experiencing substantial or high levels of community transmission, as defined by the Order. The August 3 Order expires on October 3, 2021, “but is subject to further extension, modification, or rescission based on public health circumstances.” Read the Order [here](#). The CDC site includes resources available for renters and landlords to cover missed rent payments, utilities, and rental income during the pandemic. Click here to view the [rental assistance program](#). The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau [released a toolkit on rental assistance](#) on July 28, as well as [resources to help consumers with housing costs](#).

7. **Drive for 75: Week 23 Resources.** This week, we looked at vaccine hesitancy through a different lens, by seeking to understand the reasons behind people’s choices of all kinds that negatively effect their health. And, we explored how New York City – following in the footsteps of France – will implement its Key to NYC Pass, a program that will permit only vaccinated people to enjoy indoor dining, recreation, and entertainment. Read the summary [here](#).

Advocacy Alerts and Hill News:

1. **HRSA Responds to LeadingAge Plea for PRF Funds to be Released:** Katie received a reply to her letter to HRSA Acting Administrator Diana Espinosa requesting the remaining PRF funds be released immediately. The unsatisfactory response provides a history of PRF that have been distributed to date and indicates, “HHS is committed to distributing the remaining provider relief payments as quickly and equitably as possible while utilizing effective safeguards to protect taxpayer dollars.” Espinosa offers no date certain in which providers can feel confident that further relief will be on its way. The full text of the letter can be read [here](#).
2. **LeadingAge Sends Letter of Support for Health Professions Career Legislation.** Today, LeadingAge sent a letter of support to the House Ways and Means Worker and Family Support Subcommittee Chairman Danny K. Davis (D-IL), for reintroducing the bipartisan Pathways to Health Careers Act (H.R. 4449). The bill incorporates several individual bills designed to improve the Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG) Program. It also reauthorizes the HPOG Program and expands it to provide a guarantee that all states and DC, and the U.S. Territories and tribal communities, would be eligible for this funding opportunity. The HPOG Program awards grants to low-income recipients, and trains them for in-demand health care jobs. Participants have access to supportive services like child care, transportation and career coaching, which helps to ensure high completion rates and potential for job placement and retention. Expanding HPOG could help support a pipeline for direct care professionals. You can access a copy of the letter [here](#).
3. **Word from Washington. Infrastructure legislation filed.** Sunday evening, after an extraordinary Senate weekend session, the bipartisan group of senators negotiating the “roads and bridges” infrastructure legislation filed their [2700 page bill](#), and on Monday the Senate began debate on the substance. This bill is part of the two-track infrastructure process winding its way through both houses of Congress (starting in the Senate). While this bill does not directly impact the

aging services community, it contains important broadband provisions that will benefit our members in rural and other underserved areas, as well as low income users. The bill creates a \$65 billion grant program for states with underserved areas; and extends the Emergency Broadband Beneficiaries program and renames it Affordable Connectivity Program, providing financially eligible households a \$30 per month internet subsidy.

4. **LeadingAge Joins 400 Organizations to Ask Congress to Address Telehealth Cliff** On July 26, 2021, LeadingAge joined more than 400 organizations to send a letter to Congress to urge policymakers to address the “telehealth cliff.” If Congress does not act before the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), Medicare beneficiaries will lose access to telehealth services options which have become a lifeline to many. The letter calls for Congress to advance permanent telehealth reform focused on specific priorities.

Important Announcements from LeadingAge:

1. **LeadingAge Story Collector: Virtual Reality Builds Engagement Among AL and SNF Residents**
The new [LeadingAge Story Collector](#), powered by Gold Partner Greystone, makes it easy to tell your story by making a brief audio recording or writing in your story. [One recent story explains](#) how a pilot of virtual reality programming was so popular at one of its communities, [Parker](#) has made the headsets available at all five of its communities offering skilled nursing, assisted living, and post-acute care. The activities spark conversation and build connections, and show very positive results in some residents living with dementia. Use the [Story Collector](#) to tell us yours! Submissions don’t have to be perfect; LeadingAge staff will contact you to gather more details and information.
2. **Shared Learning: Inclusion—Creating Cultures of Belonging** . Join us September 22 for a highly interactive virtual event, facilitated by Kelly Burrello, that will explore ways provider organizations are creating inclusive cultures where everyone is welcomed, valued, and respected. We’ll review examples that represent a range of approaches members are pursuing to foster inclusion within their communities. [Register now](#).