



PACE Organization Update

February 19, 2021

Please contact Brendan Flinn (bflinn@leadingage.org) with questions or comments.

COVID-19 Relief Update: On February 10, the House committee ([Energy and Commerce](#)) with jurisdiction over Medicare and Medicaid finalized its bill as part of the COVID-19 relief package. The bill includes a federal matching increase for **all** Medicaid HCBS programs (PACE, waiver, state plan) of 7.35 percentage points for one calendar year (April 1 2021-March 31 2022). The Congressional Budget Office estimates this will be a \$9.3 billion infusion for Medicaid HCBS to state agencies. Critically, the bill text requires states to actually use these dollars for home and community-based services *in addition to* their current spending. States would not be able to pocket this money for other purposes. The House will vote on the entire relief bill next week, at which point the process turns fully to the Senate. We have consistently pushed for dedicated HCBS funding in COVID-19 relief and will continue to do so. The bill also includes additional funding for key COVID-19 mitigation efforts, including vaccines, testing, PPE and workforce. More information is available in our write up on the committee bill [here](#), and other committee bills of interest to PACE organizations are linked below.

- [Ways and Means](#): Stimulus checks of up to \$1,400; funding for unemployment insurance; Elder Justice Act funding.
- [Education and Labor](#): Federal minimum wage increase (\$15/hour by 2024); Older Americans Act funding, including special money for COVID-19 vaccine education and access, and for services to address social isolation among older adults as a result of the pandemic; OSHA/worker protection funding.
- **What's not included:** The reconciliation process does not allow for an extension of the Medicare 2% sequester suspension, as that falls under Budget Committee jurisdiction and the Budget Committee cannot self-assign reconciliation bill text. The sequester suspension is set to expire on March 31 and will require separate action by Congress. The 2% cut (and the suspension of that cut) applies to all Medicare billers, including PACE organizations.

HHS and CMS Staffing News: Media reporting from this week named several Biden Administration nominations and staff hires of interest to PACE organizations. The nominee for CMS Administrator by all indications seems to be [Chiquita Brooks-LaSure](#), who played a key role in developing and implementing the ACA exchange programs (which CMS leads, in addition to its Medicare and Medicaid functions). Liz Fowler appears likely to be named head of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI), and Rachel Pryor has been identified as a staff hire in HHS focused on Medicaid ([source here](#)). During the campaign, Biden proposed an LTSS Innovation Fund run through CMMI and designed to bolster and scale home and community-based options. CMMI can develop and test models without Congress, so this component of CMS could become important for PACE organizations. Senate confirmation hearings for the HHS nominee, Xavier Becerra, are scheduled for next week. We will report out how those go.

Retail Pharmacy Partnership Update: CDC launched the Retail Pharmacy Program on February 11 and on February 18 LeadingAge hosted Dr. Ruth Link-Gelles from CDC to discuss the program and its applicability to aging services. Specific to PACE organizations, Dr. Link-Gelles said that PACE organization staff and participants can receive vaccine through the partnership if they are eligible under their state's respective eligibility criteria and if a participating pharmacy agrees to host a clinic. CDC has a list of participating pharmacies by state [here](#). While a number of LTC pharmacies/group purchasers are part of the program, and community sites like PACE organizations can work with any participating pharmacy, not all PACE pharmacy partners are on the participating pharmacy list. In any case, we continue raise with CDC the need to connect PACE organizations to vaccine.

- You can listen to our discussion with Dr. Link-Gelles here: <https://d36529sg6oenc3.cloudfront.net/Events/LeadingAge%20Coronavirus%20Update%20Call%20%282021-02-18%29.mp4>.
- A summary of our discussion is here: <https://leadingage.org/regulation/retail-pharmacy-update-interview-ruth-link-gelles-%E2%80%93-february-18-2021>

CDC Guidance on Vaccinating Homebound Persons: CDC issued guidance this week on vaccine storage, transportation and administration for people in their homes/homebound people. We understand that at least some PACE organizations have gone to participant homes and provided vaccine, so this guidance may be helpful for booster shot administration and/or for those who might provide vaccines at home in the future. The guidance can be found [here](#).

CMS Marketing Module Webinar: CMS hosted a webinar for PACE organizations on the upcoming update to the Health Plan Management System (HPMS) marketing module. Per CMS, the module update is meant to streamline reporting, and is also being updated for Medicare Advantage plans. One example of this is that marketing “codes” that are currently in use will no longer be needed for reporting. The updated module is scheduled to go live on May 28, and the current module will be available and should continue to be used until that point. On the presentation, which they said had about 300 people called in, CMS seemed open to testing and user feedback, so if opportunities for that arise we will make sure to keep everyone informed of those. The webinar was recorded by CMS did not provide a timeline for when they would post the recording. Screenshots of the new module are available [here](#).

CMS Memo on COVID-19 vaccines and duals: On February 18, CMS [issued a memo](#) for PACE organizations, MA plans and SNPs on ways to “maximize COVID-19 vaccinations among dually eligible individuals”. The memo highlights the importance of getting vaccines to dual enrollees, and advises organizations to engage enrollees (generally, not with specific instructions), and to use data (including vaccine claims data) to track vaccine and refine outreach to participants. The memo has links to CDC resources and suggests that CMS will host a webinar focused on vaccine outreach in the future. We will monitor for that and keep members up to date.

Reminder on LeadingAge Member Call Ins: LeadingAge hosts a COVID-19 update call series for members on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 3:30 PM EST. Every call includes an update on home and community-based services, updates for other provider types, and interviews with key experts (e.g., CDC officials, academics, providers) to share out real-time insights to our members. The calls generally run for one hour and recordings are on our website. Register here: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2218416852977539339>

Update archive

February 5: <https://leadingage.org/sites/default/files/PACE%20update%202.4.21.pdf>