

Home Health and Hospice Weekly Recap

March 26th, 2021



From the Hill and the Administration

- 1. New MLN articles on home health and home infusion billing.** CMS issued two new MLN articles relevant to home health agencies. One is "[Correction to Period Sequence Edits on Home Health Claims](#)" which discusses revisions to the Common Working File (CWF) home health period sequence edits so that LUPA claims are no longer excluded. The other is an article on [new changes for Medicare claims processing for home infusion](#) services as of January 1st, 2021. Both articles refer to change requests with an implementation date of July 6th, 2021.
- 2. Medicare Sequester Update:** The Senate voted on March 25 to extend the Medicare sequester suspension through December 31. This bill would prevent Medicare reimbursements, including those for home health and hospice organizations, from being cut by 2% through the end of 2021 as result of sequestration. Because this bill differs from the House bill from last week, the House will need to revote once it comes back in April. Notably, the Senate bill does **not** address the 4% PAYGO cuts to Medicare reimbursements that are slated to take effect later in 2021 (October at the earliest)- but there is more time and additional legislative vehicles to head those off. LeadingAge opposes both the PAYGO cuts and reinstating the sequester; see our statement here: <https://leadingage.org/leadingage-calls-senate-stop-billions-medicare-cuts-scheduled-begin-april-1>
- 3. Reminder on accelerated and advanced payments:** For those providers that took Medicare accelerated or advanced payments, the recoupment will likely start next month – April – because that is when a majority of the loans were made. If you took them at a different time of year, the repayments start 1 year from when you took the loan. Here is an article describing the revised terms of the Medicare accelerated and advanced payment program that passed in September that we advocated for: <https://leadingage.org/legislation/accelerated-and-advance-payment-program-repayment-begins-april-2021>
- 4. CMS HCBS FMAP Listening Session:** On The purpose of the listening session was to help inform the agency's guidance to state Medicaid and related offices as they receive and then ultimately disburse the American Rescue Plan dollars. March 25, CMS held a listening session for stakeholders interested in the HCBS FMAP increase. LeadingAge attended and made comments on rate setting/provider payments, workforce considerations, telehealth, palliative care, and allowing providers to receive FMAP dollars in addition to other COVID-19 relief money (e.g., PPP loans). Other participants included consumer groups, state agency officials, providers and their associations. CMS indicated that they would publish guidance for state agencies soon, but did not offer any other specifics.
- 5. PPP Extension Set to Take Effect:** The Senate passed a bill this week that would extend the Paycheck Protection Program application deadline from March 31 to May 31. The House previously passed the same bill, with the President's support. Prospective borrowers have until the end of May to apply for a first or second draw PPP loan. As a reminder, the American Rescue

Plan expanded PPP eligibility to 501(c)(3) organizations with no more than 500 employees **per physical location**, rather than a firm 500 employee global limit.

- 6. FEMA Coverage of Funeral Costs:** In early April, FEMA will begin providing financial assistance for funeral expenses incurred after Jan. 20, 2020 for deaths related to COVID-19 to help ease some of the financial stress and burden caused by the pandemic. The policy was finalized yesterday, and FEMA is now moving rapidly to implement this funeral assistance program nationwide. To find out if you qualify, view the COVID-19 funeral assistance program policy.
- 7. Medicare COVID-19 Data Snapshot:** CMS released an updated data snapshot detailing the impact of COVID-19 on Medicare beneficiaries, particularly among underserved beneficiaries including racial and ethnic minorities, adults 85 years old and older, and people with certain pre-existing conditions. More than 2.7 million beneficiaries were diagnosed with COVID-19 during the snapshot period, and nearly 700,000 beneficiaries were hospitalized with COVID-19, based on a review of services provided January 1, 2020 to December 26, 2020 (for claims received by January 22, 2021).

LeadingAge Events and Resources

- 1. LeadingAge Lobby Day: Sign up today!!** LeadingAge Lobby Day 2021 is set to take place on April 21. On Lobby Day, LeadingAge members advocate to Congress for aging services and we strongly encourage members of all types to participate. Members and their staff can sign up here: <https://leadingage.org/lobby-day-2021>
- 2. Upcoming Life Safety Webinar for Hospice Providers.** The *Life Safety and Emergency Preparedness: Post-COVID Compliance* webinar is now live for registration on the LeadingAge Learning Hub!
[Life Safety and Emergency Preparedness: Post-COVID Compliance](#), Thursday April 8 at 2 p.m. ET

This Webinar details current life safety and emergency preparedness challenges nursing home and hospice providers should plan for as they return to pre-pandemic operations.

- Consider approaches to sunsetting 1135 waivers for alarm and fire suppression system testing, emergency storage, emergency preparedness education for staff, and other changes that will expire after the national emergency declaration ends.
- Learn about trends in survey citations and hot-button issues that may arise when regular life safety surveys resume.
- Receive a template to help you document your organization's COVID-19 response as an official emergency preparedness drill to meet federal survey disaster planning requirements.

Link for more information: <https://learninghub.leadingage.org/courses/life-safety-and-emergency-preparedness-post-covid-compliance>

- 3. 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>

4. **LeadingAge Student Membership:** The LeadingAge Student Membership creates opportunities to address the aging services workforce crisis and engages a set of stakeholders to bring innovation to our work. Students now have access to LeadingAge national and state partner career development resources, peer-to-peer connections, and member resources to thrive. Students complete just one application to get both national and state complimentary memberships to launch a career in aging services. Help us to spread the word and build the next generation of leaders in our field. Visit the website to explore the benefits and qualifications, and share the opportunity with your networks!