



## Home Health and Hospice Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

October 28, 2022

**LeadingAge Coronavirus Update Calls Next Week. Ideas you can use today to increase staff retention. And your pandemic business plan.** Should we be worried about the differences between millennial and Gen X workers? Is it valuable to only give the most attention to underperforming staff while letting your high performers take the lead? The pandemic has caused a shift in the way we think about managing and building teams. Join us on **Monday, October 31 at 3:30 PM ET** to hear from leading human capital expert **Karl Ahlrichs** and his proven methods to inspire and manage teams. He will challenge your perceptions on managing staff and will shed insights on how we can learn from the experience of COVID to be better managers and recruit and retain new staff. On **Wednesday, November 2 at 3:30 PM ET**, we will highlight a new Pandemic Toolbox from the Health Action Alliance and will hear from **Dan Pasquini**, who authored a Pandemic Business Plan for action. He will share the latest lessons learned and tools being used by major corporations as they respond to COVID-19. 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.

**LeadingAge Home Health Member Network Call, November 1, 2:00 PM ET.** Join us on Tuesday, November 1, at 2:00 PM ET, for the Home Health Member Network call. Members will review the CY2023 Home Health Final Rule, advocacy next steps, and policy priorities for next year. Any LeadingAge member can join the [Home Health Member Network](#) or submit advance questions by emailing Katy ([kbarnett@leadingage.org](mailto:kbarnett@leadingage.org)) or Mollie ([mgurian@leadingage.org](mailto:mgurian@leadingage.org)).

**CMS Announces Hospice Care Compare Off-Cycle Refresh.** CMS announced an off-cycle refresh for the Hospice Quality Reporting Program available on Care Compare in October 2022. This off-cycle refresh will include the addition of Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP) and the Hospice Care Index (HCI) informational videos which can be viewed on Care Compare and removal of references to Hospice APU Compliance. No quality measure reporting has been updated.

**Hospice CAHPS Survey Administration Mode Experiments Released.** In 2021, CMS conducted an experiment to test a web-mail mode, a revised survey version, and modifications to survey administration protocols designed to improve overall response rates on the Hospice Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers Survey (CAHPS). The brief results of the mode experiment will be used by CMS to inform potential changes to the administration protocols and survey instrument content. The results also give smaller hospices some insight into what future survey administration methods may garner the most response to reach the threshold for a five-star rating. Overall, the results showed:

- Response rates to the revised survey were 35.1 percent in mail only mode, 31.5 percent in telephone only mode, 45.3 percent in mail-telephone, and 39.7 percent in web-mail mode.
- Response rates to web-mail mode were 13 percentage points higher for those with email addresses (49.6 percent vs. 36.7 percent).

- Response rates to mail-only administration of the revised and current survey were similar (35.1% vs. 34.2%).
- Mailing of a prenotification letter resulted in an increased response rate of 2.4 percentage points.
- Extending the field period to 49 days (from the current 42 days) resulted in an increased response rate of 2.5 percentage points in the mail only mode.

**CMS Releases Hospice Quality Reporting Program Quarterly Update for 3rd Quarter of 2022.** [The Hospice Quarterly Update](#) for the third quarter of 2022 is now available. This update includes Hospice Quality Reporting Program highlights from July to September 2022, events and engagement opportunities for the fourth quarter of 2022 (October-December 2022), and selected questions and answers from the Hospice Quality Help Desk regarding timing of the new claims-based measures and responding to letters of non-compliance. Please navigate to the HQRP Requirements and Best Practices page to download this document.

**OIG Report Finds HHA Used Multiple Strategies to Respond to COVID.** A new [report](#) from the Office of Inspector General found that home health agencies (HHAs) developed strategies to respond to challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. OIG surveyed a nationally representative sample of 400 HHAs in the fall of 2021. HHAs benefited from support from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), such as regulatory flexibilities and expanded telehealth allowances. Long standing staffing challenges from prior to the pandemic persisted and worsened with new requirements for quarantine and isolation, despite efforts to address issues staffing challenges persist. Expanded use of telehealth helped HHAs provide care while reducing COVID-19 exposure and dealing with staffing shortages. OIG raised issues about HHAs' challenges with telehealth and its future role in home health care especially given CMS' limited insight into HHAs' telehealth use. Finally, the emergency preparedness plans required by CMS guided HHAs' responses to the pandemic but fell short of fully addressing a global emergency such as COVID-19.

**CMS Updates Guidance on Surveying for Compliance with COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate.** CMS released memo [QSO-23-02-ALL](#) on October 26 to revise guidance for surveying on compliance of all provider types on the COVID-19 vaccine mandate. The new memo consolidates information from previous memos and revises guidance on assessing for compliance and assigning scope and severity of noncompliance, including considering good faith efforts toward compliance.

**NLRB and DOL Extend Deadline for Comments on Proposed Rules.** As we have shared earlier, both the National Labor Relations Board and the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, have issued proposed rules relating to standards defining when individuals are considered employees of a given organization. The NLRB rule would revise the so-called "joint employer" standard, and the DOL rule would establish a framework for classifying individuals as employees versus independent contractors. An article summarizing the two rules is [available here](#). Recently both agencies have extended the deadline for comments on their respective proposals: comments to NLRB are due Dec. 7, and comments to DOL are due Dec. 13. LeadingAge is developing comments on both proposals, and we will work with members and state partners to inform our submissions and ensure they are comprehensive of the issues involved.

**White House announces additional efforts to get treatments, vaccines to the public this fall, especially older adults.** The White House released a new fact sheet on October 25 on accessing the COVID 19 vaccine this fall as well as treatments. This effort includes a partnership with Walgreens, DoorDash, and Uber to deliver treatment to vulnerable populations, a playbook for businesses, and efforts with other vaccination partners like grocery stores and pharmacies. CMS will also do direct outreach to Medicare beneficiaries regarding getting the booster and the availability of treatment. The fact sheet can be found [here](#).

**CMS All Stakeholder Call on Strategic Plan, Other Initiatives on November 1.** CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, Deputy Administrator Jon Blum, and other senior leaders invite all interested individuals to a National Stakeholder Call on November 1 from 3:00 - 4:00 PM ET. The call will focus on the CMS Strategic Plan and other initiatives. This is not a long-term care or post acute care specific call, but it is possible some related initiatives will be discussed. To RSVP and register for the call, click [here](#).

**Employee Retention Credit FAQs Available:** As we mentioned several times at Annual Meeting, we have produced an FAQ document for members with the help of our Venable Law Firm attorney, Chris Moran. In case you haven't found it yet on the LeadingAge website, here is the link: <https://leadingage.org/irs-employee-retention-credit-erc-fags/>

**PRF Deadlines Looming for Returning Funds and Late Report Requests:** Here is an [article](#) with more details on the two PRF deadlines that certain providers must meet this week. October 28 – to submit a late reporting request and October 30 is the deadline to return funds from reporting period 3. These deadlines were shared on the Monday Coronavirus Member Call.

**1 in 10 Older Adults Has Dementia.** A new nationally representative [study](#) from the Columbia University found that 10% of older adults ages 65 and older in the United States have dementia and another 22% have mild cognitive impairments. This is the first nationally representative study of cognitive impairment prevalence in more than 20 years. The study used data on 3,500 individuals from the Health and Retirement Study who completed a comprehensive neuropsychological test and in-depth interview between 2016 and 2017. The data were used to create an algorithm for diagnosing dementia or mild cognitive impairment. Researchers found that dementia rose sharply with age. Only 3% of people between 65 and 69 had dementia while 35% of people aged 90 and over had dementia. The study also highlighted disparities in cognitive impairment with a disproportionate burden of dementia among older adults who self-identified as Black or African American.

**Survey Finds Family Caregivers Feeling Strained.** Survey research from Homethrive [found](#) that on average, 20% or more of employees are acting as unpaid caregivers for loved ones. In their second annual survey on the subject, of the 200 adults who were working while providing caregiving support to loved ones 60% were female and 75% were supporting loved ones who were aging and/or have a disability. Survey results found caregiving is taking up more time than previously with a 79% increase in the number of employees spending 5 or more hours per week on caregiving. There has also been a marked impact on work with more than a third of caregivers leaving work early, missing days of work, or rearranging work schedules due to their caregiving responsibilities. Many respondents worried that caregiving would negatively impact their job performance. Only a third of respondents had access to caregiving support benefits but 80% said they would take advantage of the benefit if their employer offered one and would even consider switching jobs if it meant access to the benefit.

**LeadingAge LTC Coalition Letter to Congress: Prioritize Aging Services Workforce.** On October 18, LeadingAge joined Argentum and the American Senior Housing Association (ASHA) in co-signing a letter to the Senate and House Congressional leadership, and to the co-chairs of the House 21<sup>st</sup> Century Long-Term Care Task Force, to ask for help in addressing the historic workforce shortage crisis, that has significantly impacted the aging services workforce. The LTC Workforce Coalition letters ask for a robust and targeted federal investment, to develop in-demand career paths and help train a workforce to care for older adults in their greatest need. Additionally, the letters specifically ask Congress to:

- Expand federal incentives to allow aging services providers to retain and attract qualified staff;
- Expand existing federal workforce funding allocated to states, and prioritize long-term care workforce shortages;
- Increase funding for senior living and geriatric care in academic settings;
- Expand and incentivize the Registered Apprenticeship Programs to develop career pathways for aging services providers and stakeholder partnerships; and
- Enact common-sense immigration programs that build dependable international pipelines of trained caregivers.

Here's the link to the letter: <https://leadingage.org/leadingage-workforce-coalition-letter/>

**ACL Launches National Center to Strengthen the Direct Care Workforce.** The Administration for Community Living (ACL) has awarded a five-year grant totaling over \$6 million to establish a national center to expand and strengthen the direct care workforce across the country. Led by the National Council on Aging (NCOA), with several partners, including PHI, National Alliance for Caregiving, and the Green House Project.

The national “Direct Care Workforce Capacity Building Center” will serve as a hub, providing tools, resources, and training to assist state systems and service providers and to support the development and coordination of policies and programs that contribute to a stable, robust direct care workforce. The center’s website will share resources from the federal government, highlight state and local model policies and best practices that can be replicated or adapted, and share training and technical assistance materials. In addition, the center will facilitate peer-to-peer sharing of lessons learned and promising practices through learning collaboratives and support collaboration between state systems, including Medicaid, aging, disability, and workforce agencies; service providers; and aging, disability and labor stakeholders. This initiative builds upon the ongoing collaboration to strengthen the direct care workforce between ACL, the Department of Labor, and other HHS agencies, including the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. More information can be found [here](#) on ACL’s website.

**ONC to Offer Webinar on Information Sharing on October 27.** The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) will offer an “Ask Us About Information Sharing” webinar on Thursday, Oct. 27, at 2:00 pm Eastern: [register here](#). Housed within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the ONC is the organization that issued and oversees implementation of the federal “Information Blocking” rule, which sets standards for how health care providers and others respond to requests for electronic health information (EHI). The rules requirements have been effective since April 2021; however, ONC has not yet defined an enforcement mechanism for providers. Among other issues, the webinar will address an aspect of the rule that changed on Oct. 6 – namely, that it now applies to a broader set of information, expanding to include all electronic PHI to the extent it is

included in a “designated record set,” as defined by HIPAA. This [ONC posting provides information](#) about the change, and [this webpage](#) provides further background about the rule. The LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies (CAST), along with the LTPAC Health Information Technology Collaborative, will be hosting ONC staff on Oct. 28 to discuss the changes in more detail. CAST will ask clarifying questions and ask ONC to develop a webinar specifically for aging services providers, and we will provide additional information for members following the meeting.

**LeadingAge Voting Resources.** Yesterday was National Voter Registration Day - an important reminder that having a plan to vote is really important for this upcoming election. Coming out of the pandemic, many states are once again changing the way that citizens can vote in their communities. Some are expanding opportunities to vote and unfortunately some states are limiting options. LeadingAge has been passionate about ensuring that older adults have access to voting and the ability to register to vote. We have created an easy to use [website](#), that will allow anyone to look up their registration status, register to vote, request a mail-in ballot, find their polling place and even look up local candidates. Please share this tool with members and help ensure that everyone has a plan for how they are going to vote this election.

**Have You Seen the New Workforce Recruitment Tools?** Backed by recent national research among potential employees, LeadingAge prepared new workforce recruitment tools. LeadingAge members can access communications strategies, message frames, messenger guidance, and tips for crafting recruitment communications. These tools are part of the expanded [Opening Doors to Aging Services](#) initiative to increase awareness of the sector and move perceptions positively. Now specific insights about connecting with potential employees are available through [Opening Doors to the Aging Services Workforce](#). These new resources are free to members. Access them now on the *new* [LeadingAge website!](#)

**Start Planning Your 2023 Annual Meeting Sessions.** Save the date! Proposals for the [2023 LeadingAge Call for Sessions](#) must be submitted by December 5, 2022. Submit your original session idea for the opportunity to speak at the 2023 LeadingAge Annual Meeting + EXPO in Chicago, IL from November 5-8, 2023. [Learn more and submit your proposal here.](#)