Nursing Home Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

January 20, 2022

Upcoming LeadingAge Coronavirus Calls. Interested in hiring refugees? What about the impact of the pandemic on society and on individuals as we get to the next normal? All calls are 3:30 PM ET. Join us on **Monday, January 23,** as we speak with Mary Klein from Westminster Communities of Florida about her organization's Afghan Refugee resettlement project. **On Wednesday, January 25,** Karen Kaplan, Science and Medicine Editor at the Los Angeles Times will join us to share her observations of changes in health care, society, and individuals' behaviors as a result of the pandemic. She has consistently provided timely, unique, and hard-hitting coverage over the course of the past three years. She has always paid attention to older people and been supportive of aging services.

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.

OIG Report Concludes Nursing Homes Aren't Doing Enough to Protect Residents During Health Emergencies. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) published a report on January 19 that concluded significant changes are needed to protect the health and safety of residents and better prepare nursing homes for current and future health emergencies. The report, the second in a 3-part series, examined characteristics of nursing homes that reported extremely high COVID-19 infection rates during the spring and fall surges of 2020. OIG made 3 recommendations focusing on staffing standards and enhanced survey oversight and technical assistance, particularly around infection control.

CDC Releases New Dashboards for Tracking Respiratory Disease. CDC has released two new dashboards for tracking respiratory disease including COVID-19, flu, and RSV. Respiratory Virus Hospitalization Surveillance Network (RESP-NET), an interactive dashboard updated weekly, can be used to follow trends and see comparisons of COVID-19, influenza, and RSV -associated hospitalization rates in different demographic groups including by age, sex, and race and ethnicity, and across seasons. A second dashboard provides a view of emergency department visit data for multiple respiratory diseases tracked by the National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP). These dashboards will prove useful to providers implementing infection control surveillance systems and in determining appropriate infection prevention and control strategies based on the prevalence of these respiratory infections in the surrounding community.

CMS Takes Aim at Inappropriate Use of Psychotropics; Aims to Increase Transparency in Public Reporting of Surveys. On January 18, CMS posted QSO Memo 23-05-NH that announces a new initiative and a policy change. CMS announced that they will begin conducting off-site MDS audits to identify potentially inaccurate schizophrenia diagnoses. This initiative is part CMS's continuing commitment to reduce unnecessary antipsychotic usage in nursing home residents. Nursing homes that are found to have inaccurately assigned and coded schizophrenia diagnoses will be sanctioned through Quality

Measures ratings adjustments on Nursing Home Care Compare. Separately, the memo announced that CMS will begin posting all nursing home citations on Nursing Home Care Compare, including those citations that are being disputed by the nursing home through the informal dispute resolution and independent informal dispute resolution (IDR/IIDR) processes. Nursing Home Care Compare will include notations to signify that citations are being disputed through the IDR/IIDR process and these citations will not be calculated in the star rating until the IDR/IIDR is complete. Read more all of these changes [here](#).

Joint replacements performed by high-volume surgeons result in significantly better outcomes. Recent [research](#) by [Clarify Health Institute](#) analyzed approximately 14% (over 178,000 combined) of full hip and knee replacements performed across the United States in 2021. The findings indicate reductions in post-acute readmissions, revision surgeries, and ED visits. These findings could be important financial considerations in making provider specialist contracting decisions or when assisting residents or participants with decisions related to selecting surgeons for hip or knee replacements.

FAQs on LeadingAge test ordering website available now. To help aging services providers navigate utilization of the LeadingAge test ordering website, we asked a number of FAQs of HHS and wrote them up for those ordering tests. The FAQs can be found at [this link](#).

Action Alert Reminder: **Let CMS Administrator Brooks-LaSure know what you think about nursing home staffing ratios.** If you have not already taken action, please [click here](#) to write to CMS Administrator Brooks-LaSure opposing the adoption of a federal minimum staffing mandate without the necessary workforce investments and reimbursement levels to ensure success. Although no rule has been published yet, we want to make sure CMS hears our concerns. Nearly 700 members have already sent letters to CMS using the simple process in the Action Alert. So please take one minute and check out the link above and add your voice to the choir today.

Senator Barrasso Leads on Bipartisan Letter to HHS on Staffing Ratios. LeadingAge is working to expand a bipartisan group of senators, led by Senator John Barrasso from Wyoming, on a letter to CMS expressing the Senators' collective concerns over CMS's intention to issue staffing mandates for nursing homes, particularly in the face of severe workforce shortages across the country. That letter is currently being circulated among Senate offices and will be sent to CMS in the near future. We will share the letter with its signatories when it is finalized.

Anticipated Delay of Fiscal Year 2024 White House Budget Request. Observers expect the President's FY24 budget request to Congress to be delayed until March, potentially pushing back Congress's appropriations timeline. The President's budget request is considered the first step in the federal budget process that includes passing annual appropriations bills that fund the government. Although federal law sets the target date of the President's budget request as the first Monday in February, this timeline often shifts depending on the circumstances. We will provide additional updates on the federal budget process as it evolves.

Reminder: Provider Relief Fund Reporting Period 4 is Open. Reporting Period 4 (RP4) opened January 1 and continues through March 31, 2023. It covers PRF received between July 1 and December 31, 2021. Members should know that this reporting period is guided by the updated reporting guidance issued in October 2021, which outlines how ARP Rural funds should be reported upon but also contains changes

to how lost revenues will be treated going forward. Members should familiarize themselves with the new guidance prior to reporting. These new requirements apply to RP4 and all future reporting periods. **LeadingAge is hosting a webinar with experts from CLA on the new PRF reporting requirements on February 2 at 2 PM ET. Providers can register [here](#).**

CMS Automating Process for CMP Letters – NO POLICY CHANGE. CMS survey staff leaders sent LeadingAge a note on January 17 indicating that they are automating parts of the process for creating and sending letters to nursing homes for imposed Civil Monetary Policies (CMPs). **No underlying policy is being changed.** As a result of the new process, there may be a "higher than normal number of due and payable collection letters during the next couple of months." CMS will not be sending a formal memo because the change simply automates parts of the process that were done manually before. They want to be sure providers know that if they notice more letters, it is due to the shift to the new process.