

Medicaid HCBS and PACE Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

February 10, 2023

LeadingAge Policy Update Calls, covering all the updates aging services providers need on what goes on in Washington and what it means for you and the people you serve, care for, and house, including but not limited to Coronavirus. Long COVID patient – study thyself! On **Monday, February 13**, Lisa McCorkell will join us to talk about the Patient-Led Research Collaborative, a group of Long COVID patients who are also researchers. Their mission is to facilitate patient-led and patient-involved research into Long Covid and associated conditions while following rigorous research methodology and to advocate for policies that enable patients, particularly the most marginalized, to access care and live with dignity. The pandemic has exhausted workers. Join us on **Wednesday, February 15** to hear from Michele Holleran, Founder and CEO of Holleran Consulting. Michele will talk about best practices to improve supervisor well-being. 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.

Tell Congress to Expand Home and Community Based Services! National Caregivers' Day is February 17. Please take this opportunity to let your representatives on Capitol Hill know you want them to support expansion of eligibility for home and community based services (HCBS) and better jobs with higher pay for the frontline caregivers who deliver HCBS. Use LeadingAge's [Action Alert](#) template to send messages to your members of Congress to support S. 100/H.R. 547.

PACE Model Isn't Immune from Workforce Woes, study illustrates. Recent reporting from [Altarum](#) on their PACE Program survey spanning the months of May to September 2022 show significant challenges recruiting, hiring, and retaining all types of workers. Direct care staff in participant homes was cited as the most challenging position by PACE directors. The article also touts PACE program employees reporting higher job satisfaction and respect in their roles, when compared with similar positions with other types of providers.

CMS Reviews Medicaid Unwinding Procedures for States' HCBS Programs. The presentation provided information on allowable and prohibited ongoing 1915(c) Appendix K flexibilities for states. CMS reviewed temporary flexibilities through Appendix K amendments that states may now wish to remain permanent in their waivers. Presenters also reviewed flexibilities that are not approvable permanently in 1915(c) waivers. Timelines and deadlines for ending of the PHE, Appendix K flexibilities, level of care redeterminations, and termination of continuous coverage were also reviewed. The slides are available [here](#).

CDC adds Covid-19 vaccines to its official immunization schedule for children, adolescents, and adults. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention added Covid-19 vaccinations for children, adolescents, and adults to its immunization schedule. These updates reflect current agency recommendations. Adding them formalizes that guidance for health care providers and schools. The CDC's vaccination schedule, released February 9, does not mandate vaccines. The FDA's vaccine advisory committee recently voted unanimously to recommend that all primary vaccination series switch to the updated

bivalent shot, but the agency has yet to adopt these recommendations. The committee also discussed a possible path forward to include yearly Covid-19 booster vaccinations, similar to the annual flu shot, but didn't formalize any action. [More information on adult immunization schedule by age here.](#)

SOTU Through an Aging Services Lens. In the President's State of the Union speech on February 7, he made references to several issues and goals related to aging services. Some highlights include:

- "Covid no longer controls our lives." Six words everyone is ready to hear, especially those who provide or use aging services.
- "We're protecting seniors' lives and life savings by cracking down on nursing homes that commit fraud, endanger patient safety, or prescribe drugs they don't need." This was the only reference to nursing homes (much shorter than last year). It's critical to note that LeadingAge's message may have gotten through because this statement does not bucket all nursing homes together. He referred only to those providers who engage in these illegal or unethical behaviors. Still, LeadingAge will be meeting with the Nursing Home Quality Initiative team to continue driving home the point that most providers do not fit this description and deserve accolades for their mission focused work.
- Guaranteeing all workers a living wage. LeadingAge has long advocated this position, coupled with reimbursement rates to pay such wages.
- "Let's get all families access to affordable and quality housing." LeadingAge agrees wholeheartedly, especially housing for low-income seniors.
- Helping older individuals stay in their homes. This point followed the housing point, seemingly tying them together. Supporting enactment of expansions like those proposed in Better Care Better Jobs bills that have been introduced in both chambers will move us closer to this end. (See LeadingAge Action Alert, below.)
- Don't cut Social Security and Medicare, lifelines for millions of older people. The President said, "stand up for seniors!" Medicare, of course, is also a lifeline for many providers of post-acute care.

LeadingAge will continue to advocate for establishing an office on aging in the White House to keep the focus on these goals and action plans.

Appropriations Chair: Work Cut Out for Us. In its first meeting of the new session of Congress, the House Committee on Appropriations met on February 8 to review its rules, hear formal introductions of its new members, and listen to its new chair review the Committee's goals. LeadingAge attends (usually virtually these days) such organizing meetings for clues as to what lies ahead on the Committee's agenda, and where we might most effectively focus our work. "We have our work cut out for us this year," Chairwoman Kay Granger (R-TX) said at the meeting. "In many ways, the odds are stacked against us. But as I look across the room, I am reminded that we – as Appropriators – always find a way to get the job done for the American people. I am hopeful that together we will continue that great tradition. As I lead this committee, I will focus our work on that which unites us. By conducting robust, bipartisan oversight of government agencies and programs through hearings, briefings, and in-person visits, we can learn more about where our tax dollars are going." Committee hearings and briefings will start soon and come quickly after the President delivers his fiscal year 2024 budget request to the Hill. As for in-person visits, LeadingAge strongly encourages our members and other aging services stakeholders to invite your members of Congress to see first-hand the amazing work you do; see LeadingAge's ["Coffee Chats with Congress Toolkit"](#) for site visits by members of Congress and their staff.

Leaders of Color Advocacy Webinar Series - Session Two: Let's Talk About State Advocacy. Effective advocacy at the state level is becoming more important with each passing year. This Tuesday, February 14 webinar, from 2 – 3:15 pm ET, will help you understand how state advocacy works, how it impacts providers of aging services, and how people at all levels of an aging services organization can become engaged in advocacy. Leaders of color will reflect on their advocacy journeys and will describe how they navigated the advocacy process; the types of advocacy work they pursued; and the practical benefits they, their team members, and residents/clients experienced. LeadingAge state executives will share examples of their advocacy work, explore the importance of building relationships with state legislators and Governor's office staff, and discuss their engagement with U.S. state senators and congressmen

CDC Releases Falls Intervention Compendium. CDC has released the 4th edition of its Effective Fall Interventions Compendium. This resource is designed to assist senior service providers, clinicians, and others address older adult falls in community. Learn more and download the resource [here](#).

Are Medicare Advantage “Supplemental Benefits” Covering LTSS? ATI Advisory and the Long-Term Care Quality Alliance are offering a webinar on Monday, March 13 from 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET to provide a deep dive into nonmedical supplemental benefits offered by Medicare Advantage plans, particularly the benefits designed to resemble Medicaid long-term care benefits that support in home support services, caregiver supports and social needs benefits. The webinar is timed with the release of a new report on these benefits. Speakers include representatives from MA plans to talk about the scope and breadth of the benefits they are offering, how they reach members to inform them, and why they chose to offer these benefits. Interested individuals can register [here](#) for the free webinar.

Applications Process Open for 2023-24 Health and Aging Policy Fellowships. The Health and Aging Policy Fellowship program (HAPF) announced it will accept applications for 2023-24 until April 17. The fellowship year begins on October 1, 2023. HAPF aims to create a cadre of leaders who will serve as change agents in health and aging policy to ultimately improve the health care of older adults. The yearlong program funds fellows to spend a year in a national policy position. The program offers training in the policy landscape, communication skills, and professional networking opportunities. HAPF will offer a series of sessions for potential applicants and other interested individuals. Check the [HAPF website](#) for application details and the schedule for information sessions.