

Workforce Policy Weekly

March 17, 2023



Upcoming LeadingAge Policy Update Calls. All calls are at 3:30 PM ET. How did REITs affect staffing during the pandemic? Not so fast! You may be surprised that it's not a completely straightforward answer. On **Monday, March 20**, **David Stevenson**, Professor of Health Policy in the Department of Health Policy at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and **Tyler Brau**, Assistant Professor of Population Health Sciences, Population Health Sciences at the Weill Cornell Medical College join us to talk about the role of Real Estate Investment Trusts In Staffing US Nursing Homes. They were two of the coauthors on a study published in January in the journal *Health Affairs*. The coauthors created a novel database of REIT investments in the U.S. and used it to study nursing staffing (RN, LPN, and CNA) in nursing homes that did and did not receive REIT investment. **Calling all Thomas Edison's and Steve Jobs wannabes!** Join us on **Wednesday, March 22** as we chat with **Don Blose**, **CEO of Spanish Cove in Yukon, Oklahoma** about the Never Too Old (N2O) program his organization offers interested residents. Initially started in 2019 as a brain health program that also creates solutions to help older people stay independent and solve problems that create barriers to independence, the program has evolved into a twice monthly gathering of residents who talk about some of the problems of aging they are experiencing and brainstorm solutions ranging from "way out of the box" to so practical it's hard to imagine why no one made this before. The participants – the innovators – design and develop prototypes, test them, and, if they are successful, seek patents and trademarks. 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.

"It's Getting Scary in Aging Services;" Results of the LeadingAge Member Snap Poll and a Blog Post.

Close to 900 LeadingAge members responded to LeadingAge's informal snap poll on workforce challenges, conducted between the end of February and the second week of March. Almost all nursing home respondents – 92% - and 70% of assisted living provider respondents said their workforce shortage is significant or severe and the staffing crisis exist in all aging services settings.

In spite of making investments and changes to the organizational structure recruitment continues to be a challenge. Respondents report the top three most difficult positions to recruit which is the same as in June 2022 are registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and certified nursing assistants. As a result, staff often make decisions of reducing or closing bds within skilled nursing facilities an memory care facilities, due to the lack of staff. Additionally, just as June 2022, respondents continue to share concerns that the percentage of their nursing shifts have relied more heavily on temporary agency staff, especially since the pandemic. Members also report strong interest in building the pipeline of potential workers by tapping into immigrant and refugee talent pools.

You can also access a brief article on the [Toplines](#) from the survey results and a [blog post](#) on the results and policy solutions for which we are advocating. The survey results give us more power to reflect member input and first-hand experience, significantly increasing the impact of our advocacy with policy makers. LeadingAge State Executives will also receive state-specific data from the Snap Poll.

ACL Proposes to Expand their Direct Care Workforce Priorities. In September 2022, HHS' Administration for Community Living (ACL) established a national technical assistance center to help strengthen the direct care workforce. With FY 2023 funding, ACL is beginning to build a hub through which state, private, and federal entities involved in the recruitment, training and retention of direct

care workers can access model policies, best practices, training materials, technical assistance, and learning collaboratives. In FY 2024, ACL requests \$11.5 million to fully fund operation of the resource hub and to support development of new approaches, as follows:

- Aging Network Support Activities – Direct Care Workforce (+\$8 million) to fully fund hub operations and establish demonstration grants to test recruiting, retention, and training approaches that can be replicated and scaled across states.
- Developmental Disabilities Projects of National Significance (+\$3 million)/Independent Living Projects of National Significance (+\$500,000) to extend the scope of the above-described initiatives to the direct care workforce that supports people with disabilities who are not covered by the statutory authority of Older Americans Act.

The Direct Care Workforce information can be found on page 12 of the *FY'24 Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees* (found [here](#) on the ACL website). An article with additional details is available [here](#).

Good news – a LeadingAge win. ERC and Medicaid Cost Reports and Rates. You may recall that some states had indicated that they would be treating Employee Retention Credit (ERC) funds like tax credits for the purposes of Medicaid cost reports, and this had the potential to reduce future Medicaid nursing home rates. LeadingAge along with AHCA met with CMS back in February to share our concerns with these practices and request CMS to take a position that they should be treated like other relief funds (one-time revenues). At that time, CMS asked for time to consider the issue. We have heard that CMS will be notifying states this week that the ERC funds should be treated like other COVID relief funds (e.g., PPP, PRF) and NOT like a tax credit on Medicaid cost reports.

Skilled Nursing News Article: “We Need to Start Today: Nursing Home Providers Strive to Implement Workforce Tech Amid Challenges.” While technology can help solve workforce challenges, some pointers can ease organizations into using the technology. Scott Code, LeadingAge CAST’s vice president, spoke with *Skilled Nursing News* for the article “[“We Need to Start Today’: Nursing Home Providers Strive to Implement Workforce Tech Amid Challenges.”](#)” Software that assists with flexible scheduling, gives early access to earned wages, and supports employee retention by offering tools such as pulse surveys can be beneficial, Code said. “Whether it’s technologies that help support staffing practices ... or technologies that help make staff be more efficient and/or reduce the need for staff, providers are looking at both,” Code told *Skilled Nursing News*. The article mentioned robots that give medicine and deliver other items, assist with physical therapy, and more.

Webinar: Let’s Talk About Federal Advocacy. On Thursday, March 23, 2 – 3:15pm ET, LeadingAge is hosting the last of a three-part advocacy webinar series designed to help leaders of color become involved in advocacy, understand the process at the state and federal levels, and examine the importance of their unique perspective in public policy and advocacy. This session will focus on how leaders of color can get involved in advocacy at the federal level. Members of the LeadingAge public policy and advocacy team will provide an overview of the federal advocacy process, discuss their federal advocacy agenda and outline ways leaders of color can work with LeadingAge to meet shared advocacy goals. A leader of color will offer guidance on how other leaders can work with the executive and legislative branches at the federal level to advance better national policy that address the needs of their organizations, the people those organizations serve, and the team members who deliver services and supports. You’ll take home useful resources available to LeadingAge members interested in advocacy.

Panelists are: Fernando Torres-Gil, M.S.W., Ph.D., Professor, Social Welfare and Public Policy; Director, Center for Policy Research on Aging at UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs; Ruth Katz, Senior Vice President of Public Policy/Advocacy, LeadingAge; Linda Couch, Vice President of Housing Policy, LeadingAge; Deke Cateau, Chief Executive Officer, A.G. Rhodes and LeadingAge Board Member; Moniqua Acosta, Director of Volunteer Services, Landis Homes Retirement Community and Vice Chair, LeadingAge Leaders of Color Network Advisory Board; and Karen Gipson, Chief Mission Advancement Officer, Aldersgate and Chair, LeadingAge Leaders of Color Network Advisory Board. Register for the webinar [here](#).

LeadingAge Leadership Summit. We often hear from LeadingAge members that there is little time for future planning due to navigating day-to-day operations, keeping up with change, and addressing ongoing challenges. The [LeadingAge Leadership Summit](#) gives members the much-needed time to step back and come together to think big(ger) and creatively build a stronger, sustainable, and resilient future in aging services. [Read more about the keynote speakers, 75 diverse voices, and 30+ sessions that will inspire at the 2023 Leadership Summit.](#)