



## Home Health Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

March 31, 2023

**Upcoming LeadingAge Policy Update Call on Monday, April 3, at 3:30pm ET.** We are finalizing plans for our April 3, 3:30 Policy Update Call and will update you as soon as we have additional information. You can also find previous call recordings of every 3:30 LeadingAge call [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.

**CMS Says PHE Waivers Still in Place Will Remain in Place Until May 11.** On March 29 the Senate joined the House in approving a resolution to end the COVID National Emergency. LeadingAge members are asking if some of the waiver flexibilities authorized under the Public Health Emergency will also end a month earlier than planned. **They will not.** LeadingAge asked CMS staff on March 30 whether the Congressionally-approved resolution – if the President signs it as expected - means waiver flexibilities will also end. The waivers LeadingAge members are concerned about (including but not limited to the 3 day stay waiver, home health therapy assessment waivers, and hospice volunteer requirement waiver) are connected to the Public Health Emergency, not the COVID National Emergency. These waivers will end at the end of the Public Health Emergency on May 11, as planned and previously announced.

Regarding the 3 day stay waiver, LeadingAge has written to the [Secretary of HHS](#) and to [leaders in Congress](#) seeking changes to extend the waiver or eliminate the requirement. We are working with HHS and Congress to continue to press to eliminate this outdated, unnecessary policy.

Regarding home health therapy assessments, LeadingAge will advocate for their continuation with Congress. We have asked [CMS to clarify the rules around the use of telehealth in routine home care for hospices](#) and to use enforcement discretion as hospices ramp back up to full volunteer loads.

**CMS Shares Additional Information and Clarification on PDGM Payment Model Changes for CY2023.** CMS met its statutory requirement to host a stakeholder meeting on the Medicare Home Health Prospective Payment System CY2023 Rate Development with a March 29 meeting. The CMS presentation from the meeting is available [here](#). While there are quite a few slides with considerable detail, CMS focused during the meeting on questions it had already received after the slides were posted in late February. It was difficult to track questions and answers therefore during the meeting; LeadingAge requested CMS create a separate document of the questions answered during the webinar for providers to read instead of relying on the transcript of the meeting. CMS agreed and is hoping to have those posted in the next week or two. Additionally, CMS committed to periodically updating the document as they did for the PHE information. LeadingAge will review this conversation at the next Home Health Member Network meeting on Tuesday, April 4 at 2pm ET. You can sign up for those meetings [here](#).

**Kaiser Releases Poll Results: Show Political Majorities on Both Sides Support Medicare and Medicaid.** In an article released today – [KFF Health Tracking Poll March 2023: Public Doesn't Want Politicians To Upend Popular Programs](#) – the authors lay out statistical analysis of support for both government funded programs. While support for Medicare remains strong on both sides of the aisle, Medicaid support dwindles among individuals without a personal familial or friend's use of the program.

Of note, for individuals not reporting a connection to Medicaid, their views trend towards ‘Medicaid as primarily a government welfare program’ compared with ‘Medicaid as primarily a government health insurance program that helps people pay for health care.’ The data is timely as Congress engages in debt limit and budgetary negotiations.

**CMS Posts HHVBP QAPI Videos.** The Home Health Value Based Purchasing (HHVBP) TA team posted two new 20-minute on-demand recordings on the [Expanded HHVBP Model webpage](#): (1) [Patient and Family/Caregiver Engagement: Assessment and Goal Setting](#) and (2) [Care Transitions: Provider Communication](#). Providers are encouraged to consider implementation of the strategies presented in these recordings as they refine their quality improvement efforts to improve performance in the expanded HHVBP Model.

**Legislation Introduced to Support Senior Food Insecurity and Workplace Discrimination Protections.** U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), Chairman of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, [introduced](#) two bills to support senior economic security across, including protections from workplace age discrimination and increased access to healthy, affordable meals for older adults and adults with disabilities. An estimated 5.2 million older adults struggle to put enough food on the table and many older Americans have trouble finding consistent employment due to age discrimination.

**Telehealth services helped reduce opioid overdose fatalities.** On March 29, a study was published indicating that medication treatment for opioid use disorder via telehealth helped to significantly reduce overdoses during the pandemic, though not as much as in-person treatment in an office setting or via certified opioid treatment programs. The large study from CDC, CMS and NIH researchers in JAMA Psychiatry concluded that between September 2019 and February 2021, patients receiving telehealth drug therapy for opioid use disorder had 33 percent lower adjusted odds of a fatal overdose than those receiving no medication treatment. That’s compared with a 38 percent lower risk of a fatal overdose among patients being treated in-person and 59 percent among those in opioid treatment programs certified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at HHS. [Read the full study here.](#)

**Pew Charitable Trusts Releases State Budget Graphic.** Each state’s budget is a composite of funding from state tax revenue, federal funding, and other sources. The graphic released on March 29 by Pew shows how each state’s funding breaks out. See how your state stacks up, [here](#).

**Home Health CAHPS Preview Reports with Star Ratings Now Available.** Preview Reports reflecting results from the Home Health Care CAHPS (HHCAHPS) Survey from October 2021 through September 2022 (2021, Q4 – 2022, Q3) are now available on [this page](#). These same data will be updated on Medicare’s Care Compare tool [here](#) in April 2023. The Preview Reports present the publicly reported results, which also include star ratings for those agencies with data for 40 or more patient surveys in the 4-quarter reporting period.

**House Speaker to the President: “You are on the clock.”** On March 28, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy wrote a letter to President Biden urging him to negotiate spending cuts in order to raise the debt limit. Speaker McCarthy and President Biden last met to discuss the debt limit in February. Speaker McCarthy and his Republican colleagues have vowed to use the debt ceiling to achieve their own priorities, like major spending cuts, and they want President Biden to come to the bargaining table before the country defaults. In his March 28 letter, Speaker McCarthy laid out five broad ideas to save money: 1) Cut non-

defense spending; 2) Claw back unspent pandemic aid; 3) tighten work requirements for entitlement programs; 4) Enact policies to lower energy costs; and 5) Secure the boarder to stop illegal importation of fentanyl. The letter doesn't go into any details on Speaker McCarthy's proposals, some of which would result in [devastating cuts to programs that support older adults and their families](#), including [cuts to affordable senior housing programs](#). In response to the letter, the President's press secretary said in a statement that President Biden is willing to talk about fiscal policy, but not as a condition of raising the debt limit. [Click here to read Speaker McCarthy's letter in full.](#)

**10M Could Lose Food Assistance Under Proposed Bill.** An analysis of a new bill that would expand the population of people subject to SNAP's work requirement determines the bill, HR 1581, could limit food stamp access to two million households age 50 – 65. Currently, individuals aged 18 or over and under 50 are limited to three months of SNAP benefits every three years unless they are working or in a work or training program at least 20 hours a week. The bill would raise the age limit for complying with these requirements from 50 to 64. The paper, from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, says, "SNAP's existing work requirement, which operates as a time limit where, if over three months someone is unable to document they work or participate in a qualifying employment and training program for at least 20 hours a week, they are cut off from SNAP benefits — and aren't eligible again until a total of three years has passed." Many other households would also be negatively impacted by the bill's changes. "Nationwide more than 10 million people, about 1 in 4 SNAP participants, live in households that would be at risk of losing food assistance benefits under this bill," the [paper](#) says.

**HHS Secretary Becerra Continues Testifying on Capitol Hill.** After providing testimony on March 23 at the [Senate Finance Committee](#) and the Senate Appropriations Labor-HHS Subcommittee, HHS Secretary Xavier will be testifying at several more hearings the week of March 27 on the President's 2024 Budget Proposal:

- **House HHS Appropriations Subcommittee:** On March 28 at 10am ET, the [House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee will hold a hearing](#) on the Health and Human Services (HHS) Department's fiscal 2024 budget request with testimony from HHS Secretary Becerra. [Click here for more.](#)
- **House Ways and Means Committee:** On March 28 at 2pm ET, the House Ways and Means Committee will hold a hearing on President Biden's fiscal 2024 budget request with testimony from HHS Secretary Becerra. [Click here for more.](#)
- **House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee:** On March 29 at 10am ET, the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee will hold a hearing on the Department of Health and Human Services' fiscal 2024 budget request with testimony from HHS Secretary Becerra. [Click here for more.](#)

**CMS Releases New BIMS Resources for Post-Acute Providers.** CMS is offering a set of cue cards to assist providers in conducting the Brief Interview for Mental Status (BIMS), the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2 to 9), and the Pain Interview, as referenced in setting-specific guidance. This resource is intended to be utilized as a supplemental patient communication tool that provides a visual reference for the coding of response options. More detailed instructions regarding the use of cue cards and the administration of the BIMS in writing can be found in your setting-specific guidance manual. The cue cards are available in the **Downloads** section of the [HH QRP](#) Training page.

**CMS Releases New Video Tutorial for GG0170C: Lying to Sitting on Side of Bed.** CMS released a short video tutorial to assist providers with coding GG0170C. Lying to Sitting on Side of Bed. This 5-minute

video is designed to provide targeted guidance using simulated patient scenarios. To access the video, click on the following link: [GG0170C. Lying to Sitting on Side of Bed.](#) If you have questions about accessing the resources or feedback regarding the trainings, please email [PAC Training](#).

**Cuts a “Five-Alarm Fire” for Older Adults, White House Says.** Contemplated House cuts to domestic discretionary programs in FY24 would equate to a [“five-alarm fire” for older adults](#), the White House said on March 23. Individual [departmental assessments](#), requested and received by House Committee on Appropriation Democrats, describe how the House Freedom Caucus’s suggested cuts would impact programs. The March 23, White House assessment takes a cross-department view of the discussed cuts’ impact on older adults and says the suggested cuts would worsen Social Security and Medicare wait times, rob seniors of healthy meals, cut housing for seniors, and reduce other vital services for older adults. “By suggesting cuts that would rob a million older adults of nutrition services, deny thousands of seniors access to paid work opportunities, and put seniors across the country at risk of homelessness, the Republican proposal shows that they are willing to turn their backs on this vulnerable portion of our population at a time when they need the support the most,” a March 23 [press release](#) from Appropriations Democrats says.

**Strategic Foresight: A Critical Tool for Innovative Strategy Webinar.** Does your organization have the strategic foresight to anticipate future changes? Join strategy and governance experts Olivia Mastry, JD, MPH, and Anne Jin Soo Preston on April 11 at 2 p.m. ET for a virtual workshop to help your organization take strategic action now based on anticipated changes to our sector. [Learn more and register.](#)

**Committing to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).** There has never been a more important time to raise our individual and collective awareness, explore shared values, and identify scalable ways to cultivate ongoing practices of diversity, inclusion, and belonging. [Committing to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) is a new Shared Learning Series](#) designed to guide LeadingAge provider members through a six-part educational series of peer-to-peer learning and self-reflection that will enhance your understanding of the principles and practices associated with diversity, equity, and inclusion. [Learn more and register by April 28.](#)