



Hospice Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

September 22, 2023

LeadingAge Policy Update Calls; all calls are at 3:30 p.m. ET. With an updated vaccine formula rolling out this fall, it's important to know how this can impact our members and the people they serve. Join us on **September 25** to hear from Todd King, Senior Director of Clinical Services, and Nicole Kostelic, Executive Director of Quality LTC at Omnicare, a CVS Health Company. They will talk about what's new with the flu, COVID, and additional vaccination considerations, and discuss overcoming vaccine hesitancy. Members and other interested individuals can sign up to join LeadingAge's Policy Update calls [here](#). 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.

Quarterly Update on Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP) Now Available. Swingtech sends informational messages to hospices related to the Quality Reporting Program (QRP) on a quarterly basis. Their latest outreach communication is now [available](#). To receive Swingtech's quarterly emails, send an email to QRPHelp@swingtech.com. Be sure to include the name of your agency and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Certification Number (CCN) along with any requested updates to add or change receiving emails.

LeadingAge meets with Domestic Policy Council on Hospice Special Focus Program. LeadingAge, along with our national association partners, met with the White House Domestic Policy Council on September 18 to discuss our concerns with the proposed implementation of the hospice special focus program. We discussed our support for the program but discussed flaws in CMS's proposed algorithm that we had outlined in our [comment letter](#). DPC staff asked a number of good questions that showed understanding of the issues we were raising and asked to see our comments in follow up.

Workforce: Reimagining Federal Pell Grants. The Young Invincibles released a report, *Reimagining Federal Pell Grants: Reshaping the Talent Pipeline for Young Adults*, which examines how increasing access to financial aid for short term credential programs may jump start the careers of many and help address the critical shortage of skilled workers in the US. The brief found that providing the young adult workforce with career training and reskilling opportunities creates pathways to economic mobility and that this is especially true for workers from marginalized communities. Many young people are reimagining education and are seeking nontraditional training opportunities outside of a typical university program, YI found. This report asserts that expanding access to the Pell grant to include certificate and credential readiness programs, which currently do not comply with the minimum Pell grant length requirements, would engage a new generation of workers capable of working in a variety of new roles. Read the full report click [here](#).

PHI Releases Annual Snapshot of the Direct Care Workforce in the United States. The annual report provides a holistic and sober look at the current state of paid caregiving across residential and licensed settings. The snapshot, released September 11, includes key findings about the future of the long-term care sector, detailed demographics, and barriers to sustainable growth. PHI estimates that nearly one

million jobs will be added to the caregiving industry over the next eight years while 9.3 million caregiving roles will need to be filled. To report can be found [here](#).

“Up to Date” Definition Change Reporting Trainings. CDC will change the NHSN surveillance definition of “up to date” for reporting weeks beginning on September 25, 2023 to align with new [ACIP recommendations](#) for COVID-19 vaccines. Once the new vaccine and new vaccination recommendations are applied to surveillance data collection, the percentage of long-term care residents and healthcare personnel who are reported as up to date for COVID vaccine may change. **Hospice agencies serving nursing home residents are included in the mandate for up-to-date reporting.**

Restart of Free COVID Tests Mailed to Households. Beginning September 25, every U.S. household can again place an order to receive four more free COVID-19 rapid tests delivered directly to their home. Starting September 25, the free tests can be ordered via www.covidtests.gov. HHS officials say the tests are able to detect the latest COVID variants and are intended to be used through the end of the year. In related news, the Food & Drug Administration has a website to [see if existing COVID tests’ expiration dates have been extended](#).

No Change in HHS Policy for Distributing COVID Test Kits to LTC Providers. With the uptick in COVID cases, LeadingAge has received some questions about whether HHS is still distributing COVID-19 test kits to long-term care providers and what to do to obtain additional test kits or ask questions. We queried the individual who leads this work in the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR). First, HHS is continuing to distribute test kits to assisted living and nursing home providers, sending weekly allocations to sites unless they have asked to no longer receive test kits or have asked for a decrease in their allocations. If providers have questions or want to request more test kits, they are advised to email tdx@hhs.gov with specific numbers and details on where to send the test kits.

Reminder – PRF Reporting Deadline Sept. 30. Provider Relief Fund Reporting Period 5 reports are due just 10 days from now. Providers who received PRF and ARP Rural payments from January 1 - June 30, 2022 must submit their reports no later than 11:59 p.m. ET on September 30. Failure to submit a report will require the provider to return the funds received. As providers complete their reports, they are encouraged to look very closely at the expenses that they submit to make sure there is a clear nexus to COVID-19. Some providers who had their prior reports audited had some of their expenses disallowed, as the expenses were not deemed related to preventing, preparing for or responding to COVID-19. More information on allowable PRF and ARP Rural expenses can be found [here](#).

Department of Labor Will Offer Free Webinar on PUMP Act. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division (DOL) has announced a free educational webinar concerning the federal Providing Urgent Maternal Protections (PUMP) for Nursing Mothers Act. The [PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act](#), which became effective in late December 2022, extends right-to-pump protections under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act to additional workers and provides employees access to additional remedies for violations. The series will include webinars tailored for specific employment sectors, including one for healthcare on Wednesday, November 15 from 2 -3 p.m. ET. The webinar is free, but [registration is required](#).

Last Week’s Hospice Weekly Update. Here is the September 15, 2023 [Hospice Update](#).