



Hospice Weekly: Recap of Leading Age Updates

September 8, 2023

LeadingAge Policy Update Calls; all calls are at 3:30 PM ET. On a recent call both our guest, Darcie Baggott and Jenna talked about connecting younger kids with aging services early. LeadingAge member, the James L. West Center for Dementia Care has a program that engages middle school students in care. **Kristie Boiles**, who created and runs that program, will join us on **Monday, September 11** to talk about it. Join us for this fruitful conversation.

Students participating in medical, nursing, and therapy programs rarely identify working with the geriatric population as a primary goal. Two key elements that have been associated with improving students' openness to pursuing a career in geriatrics are increased clinical education opportunities with older adults and rigorous program curricula covering geriatric competencies outlined by professional organizations. Join us on **Wednesday September 13** to hear from Jessica Dunn, Director of Clinical Education at Seton Hall University talk about the barriers related to staffing and retention as well as best practice strategies to improve recruitment, retention, and engagement of quality geriatric practitioners.

Social isolation and loneliness have been associated with an increased risk of dementia and premature mortality from all causes. The pandemic has exacerbated the loneliness issue, but it has also increased acceptance of virtual engagement to meet social needs. Join us on **Monday September 18** to hear from Meghan Young, Associate Director for Opening Minds through Art (OMA) at the Scripps Gerontology Center, Miami University. She will talk about a new virtual tool has been developed to engage older and younger adults in meaningful conversations and fun activities.

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.

LeadingAge Hospice Member Network Next Tuesday. The LeadingAge Hospice Member Network will be Tuesday, September 12th at 2pm ET. We will continue to discuss program integrity issues and advocacy on technical denials during audits. [Click here to sign up](#) for Member Networks and stay connected.

HHS Issues Proposed Rule to Protect People with Disabilities from Discrimination. A new [proposed rule](#) from the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Civil Rights would mandate that treatment decisions are not made based on preconceptions of a person's disability by any program receiving funding from HHS. This rule would update critical sections of regulation pertaining to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Comments on the proposed rule are due Monday, November 13. More specifically, the proposed rule would:

1. Ensure that medical treatment decisions are not based on biases or stereotypes about individuals with disabilities, judgments that an individual will be a burden on others, or beliefs that the life of an individual with a disability has less value than the life of a person without a disability.
2. Clarify obligations for web, mobile, and kiosk accessibility.
3. Establish enforceable standards for accessible medical equipment.

4. Clarify requirements in HHS-funded child welfare programs and activities.
5. Prohibit the use of value assessment methods that place a lower value on life-extension for individuals with disabilities when that method is used to limit access or to deny aids, benefits, and services.
6. Clarify obligations to provide services in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of individuals with disabilities.

House Committee Seeks Input on Workforce, Payments, Financing. In a September 7 open letter to health care stakeholders, House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith (R-MO) said the Committee is seeking information about [Improving Access to Health Care in Rural and Underserved Areas](#). The Committee is seeking to “identify how geographic barriers, misaligned Medicare payment incentives, and consolidation may be driving facility closures and workforce shortages.” Chairman Smith outlined five areas for which the Committee is seeking comment: geographic payment differences, sustainable provider and facility financing, aligning sites of service, the health care workforce, and innovative models and technology. LeadingAge looks forward to reviewing the request for information and providing comment before the Committee’s October 5 deadline.

Senate, then House, Return for Appropriations Work. After a summer recess, the Senate and House return to D.C. on September 5 and 12, respectively. At the top of Congress’s lengthy to-do list is completing fiscal year 2024 appropriations bills, including the HUD funding bill. While the Senate and House Appropriations Committees have each passed their own HUD FY24 funding bills, the bills are radically different in how much they would fund HUD programs, including contract renewal funding, funding for new Section 202 homes, funding for Service Coordinators, and funding for the Older Adult Home Modification Program, and funding for the HOME program. In every respect, the Senate bill is much better than the House’s. LeadingAge hopes all aging services stakeholders [contact their congressional offices using this action alert](#) and urge swift enactment of a HUD funding bill at the highest possible funding levels. Congress is not expected to enact appropriations bills by the October 1, 2023, start of FY24 and thus must pass a continuing resolution, which will have a rough road to enactment this year. On August 31, the White House sent Congress a list of federal programs that would need stop-gap funding during the duration of any continuing resolution, which typically funds programs at no more than the prior fiscal year’s levels. The list contains a request for additional funding for only one HUD program, the defaulted Reverse Mortgage Funding portfolio, which is not a HUD rental assistant program. More information on HUD funding for FY24 is available [here](#).

Department of Labor Monthly Jobs Report Shows Growth in Healthcare Jobs, Yet Demand for Workers Continues to Exceed Supply. According to a [September 1 report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the number of healthcare jobs increased by 71,000 in August, up from 63,000 added in July. Hospitals (+14,500), nursing and residential care facilities (+16,500), and home health care services (+11,000) all saw growth in August. Job increases in nursing and residential care services for August exceeded the 11,500 added in July. In aggregate, the U.S. added 187,000 non-farm jobs last month, the same number as were added in July. The nation’s unemployment rate rose by 0.3 percentage point to 3.8 percent in August, which is little different from a year earlier, when the unemployment rate was 3.7 percent. The Bureau’s [Job Openings and Labor Turnover report for July 2023](#), however, confirms that demand for labor continues to notably exceed supply, with [data showing](#) a ratio of 0.7 unemployed persons per job opening - i.e., there are approximately 1.5 jobs for every one individual seeking employment.

Last Week’s Hospice Weekly Update. Here is the September 1, 2023 [Hospice Update](#).

