



Senior Housing Weekly

September 1, 2023

Housing Network. There is **no Housing Network call on Monday, September 4.** LeadingAge will be closed for Labor Day. Any LeadingAge member may join the Housing Network, which hosts weekly calls on Mondays at 12:30pm ET and serves as an education and peer sharing network for affordable senior housing providers. Join the Housing Network by contacting [Linda](#) or [Juliana](#).

LeadingAge Policy Update Calls; all calls are at 3:30 PM ET. No call on Monday, September 4. LeadingAge will be closed for Labor Day. Building on our August 30 conversation on retention, **on Wednesday, September 6,** we'll be joined by **Gretchen Berlin, RN**, Senior Partner at McKinsey & Company, who will talk about her recent study focusing on [reimagining the nursing workload and finding time to close the workforce gap](#). More workforce! On a recent call both our guest and Jenna Kellerman, LeadingAge's director of workforce strategy and development, talked about connecting younger kids with aging services early. 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. 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.

Senate, then House, Returns 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](#).

FCC Boosts Internet Subsidy, HUD Recommits to Enrolling Residents. On August 28, HUD and the Federal Communications Commission [announced](#) a new partnership to urge HUD-assisted residents to enroll in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The program provides a monthly discount of up to \$75 per month toward internet service for eligible households. The monthly discount had been capped at \$30 a month but, on August 3, the FCC [raised it](#) to up to \$75 a month for households in high cost

areas. Households participating in the ACP can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price. On August 28, HUD said it was still in the process of working with the FCC to streamline [enrollment of HUD multifamily residents](#) in the ACP through data sharing agreements that currently enable voucher holders and public housing residents to enroll with reduced paperwork. More information on the ACP is available [here](#).

HUD's IWISH Demonstration Thwarted by Delays, Data, and COVID. HUD has published the evaluation of its three-year integrated Wellness in Supportive Housing (IWISH) demonstration. Congress directed HUD to undertake the demonstration in the January 2014 HUD appropriations bill for fiscal year 2014. LeadingAge supported the demonstration's establishment as well as its two-year extension after the initial three-year demonstration ended in September 2020. Congress's goal for IWISH was to test housing with services models for older adults that demonstrate the potential to delay or avoid the need for nursing home care. An article about the evaluation's findings and caveats is available [here](#).

HUD Session on Direct Rental Assistance. HUD is convening a virtual meeting to share its interest in partnering with philanthropy, public housing authorities, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to launch a pilot program testing provision of flexible direct rental assistance payments to people current waiting for rental assistance. HUD will share more details about the proposed pilot during the meeting. Register for the September 7, 2 – 3pm ET, meeting [here](#).

Register Now for Next LeadingAge HOTMA Virtual Training. Registration is open for LeadingAge's "HOTMA 2.0: Implementing New Requirements" virtual training on September 13, 2-4pm ET. The training will provide a closer look at HUD's new requirements for changing income, deductions, recertifications, and more in HUD-assisted multifamily housing. Beginning in January 2024, affordable senior housing providers will have to comply with new HUD rules under the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act, or "HOTMA." The new rules include adjustments to the maximum asset limits for residents, changes to the elderly/disabled deduction, a threshold change for medical deductions, and more. Register for the September 13 LeadingAge HOTMA 2.0 virtual training to learn more about implementation and next steps. Registration is free for LeadingAge members and is available [here](#). A recording of LeadingAge's first HOTMA training, in June 2023, is available [here](#).

HUD Continues to Offer Free COVID Tests to Section 202 Communities. HUD and HHS continue to provide COVID-19 antigen test kits available to HUD Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly properties free of charge. Section 202 owners and site-based staff can register to order test kits to be delivered directly to their properties on a weekly basis using the Health Partner Ordering Portal. This [webpage](#) provides detailed information and instructions for Section 202 property staff on how to register and place orders. HUD highly encourages Section 202 property staff to review the instructional materials before beginning the process, including the need for an iREMS number for the "State PIN" field of the order form (the process for attaining an iREMS numbers is described on the [COVID test resource page](#)).

Stay Cautious for the Fall Respiratory Disease Season. CDC shared their Respiratory Disease Season Outlook on a partners information session on August 30 to discuss predictions for the 2023-2024 respiratory disease season. CDC predicts a moderate COVID wave and typical waves of flu and RSV this respiratory disease season but warns that a strain on the healthcare system could be possible depending on various factors. CDC warns that though individual diseases may peak at different times, the respiratory disease season as a whole will likely peak higher than pre-pandemic seasons. COVID severity

is likely to be consistent with last year’s severity, but timing of a peak is unknown and both severity and peak will depend on factors such as vaccine uptake and appearance of immune-escaping variants. Flu is predicted to be within the typical range of severity but CDC warns flu season could peak early this year. RSV is anticipated to be typical in severity, but CDC warns it is challenging to anticipate RSV severity and peak due to a lack of data and models at this time. Other factors, such as RSV vaccine uptake, will also have an impact. LeadingAge encourages members to work with your pharmacy partners to ensure you are able to offer vaccination for all three diseases in your communities.

FEMA Webinar on Preparedness for Providers of Aging Services. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), along with the HHS Administration on Community Living (ACL) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offer providers of services to older adults a webinar to help them prepare to continue critical services, even during disasters. The webinar, set for September 6 from 10:30 AM – Noon ET, will cover continuity of operations, preparedness planning for older adults, disaster mental health issues, and case studies. All interested stakeholders are invited and may register [here](#).

HHS Recommends Adjustment to Marijuana Classification Under Federal Law: Report. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on August 29 sent a letter to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) recommending that marijuana be reclassified from a Schedule I drug to a Schedule III drug under the Controlled Substances Act, according to a [report from Bloomberg](#). While this recommendation does not change the legal status of marijuana under federal law, nor does it bind the DEA to make a scheduling change, it reflects that HHS, including its Food & Drug Administration, has taken action in response to an [October 2022 statement from President Biden on marijuana reform](#), in which the President directed HHS and the U.S. Department of Justice (which houses the DEA) to initiate an administrative process “to review expeditiously how marijuana is scheduled under federal law.” As noted in the Bloomberg article, Schedule III drugs are considered as less dangerous than Schedule I substances and can be obtained legally with a prescription. A reclassification would not resolve all conflicts between federal and state laws regulating use of marijuana for medical or recreational purposes, but HHS’s recommendation is a significant development. DEA, which has final authority on the issue of rescheduling, will now undertake its own review, and we will continue to follow this evolving story.