



## Medicaid HCBS and PACE Weekly Recap

September 13, 2024

**National Policy Pulse Call.** LeadingAge’s members-only briefing and analysis call with our experts, “National Policy Pulse,” happens every Monday at 3:30 p.m. ET. Register for the calls (registration required even if you were registered for the previous 3:30pm policy update calls) [here](#). Your registration will keep you on the list for all calls in 2024, and we’ll send a new registration link to members for calls in 2025 so you never miss a beat.

**LeadingAge Meets with CMS Principal Deputy on MA Flex Benefits.** On September 6, LeadingAge met with the Principal Deputy Administrator and COO of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Jonathan Blum, Tim Englehardt Director of the CMS Medicare-Medicaid Coordination Office and CMS senior advisor Kristiana Yao. The meeting resulted from a July 25 [joint letter](#) co-signed by LeadingAge and the National PACE Association in which we outlined concerns about Medicare Advantage (MA) use of flex benefit cards to lure PACE participants from their integrated programs. We urged CMS to take action to curb predatory marketing and provide protections to PACE participants by allowing them to re-enroll in PACE at any time, require completion of a voluntary PACE disenrollment form to authenticate a participant's informed choice to enroll in an MA plan, and clarify guidance and strengthen oversight of MA marketing brokers. From the meeting, Mr. Blum agreed, “we are aware of unintended consequences [of these flex cards] on other programs.” CMS was grateful for our recommendations in the letter and noted that the problem is “multifaceted with no silver bullet.” LeadingAge pressed on concerns about flex benefit cards being counted as income for individuals receiving other government benefits like Medicaid or federal rent subsidies. As we continue to advocate for standardized guidance and stronger beneficiary protections, we will keep members up to date. Here is a [bulletin](#) with more background.

**LeadingAge Releases “The Immigration Imperative” White Paper Outlining Necessary Action to Support our Aging Services Workforce.** Aging service providers are seeking new and innovative approaches to strengthen and build America’s long-term care workforce—including reforms to our outdated and inefficient approach to legal immigration. This issue is one of the most critical for LeadingAge members and we are thrilled to announce the release of our latest white paper, [The Immigration Imperative](#). This paper offers a timely and relevant overview of current issues followed by practical recommendations on policy changes that will help to increase the pipeline of foreign-born long-term care workers in the U.S.—and create a foundation for them to thrive in our member communities. Our press released on this important LeadingAge priority can be found [here](#).

**CHCS Releases Brief Outlining CA Medicaid Struggles to Compensate Providers for Travel:** The Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) assessed reimbursement for some Medi-Cal services and found programmatic limitations hindering growth in service utilization. Medi-Cal is California’s Medicaid program providing healthcare. Because Medi-Cal doesn’t cover long-term services and supports (LTSS), the brief didn’t directly assess provider reimbursements in the LTSS arena. The brief alludes to correlation of provider rates with the ability and willingness of providers to participate in the reviewed service categories for Medicaid. Authors suggest ways in which California can amend service definitions and limitations to better optimize time and money spent traveling to distant participants or ways the state and managed care companies could

implement financial incentives for more rural providers with higher transportation cost burden. This brief could help inform your local advocacy for rate increases or payment for transportation as a portion of the rate as a community-based provider. Read the full publication [here](#).

**PACE: New EDS Submission Edits.** On September 4, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Medicare Plan Payment Group released updates to the Encounter Data Software (EDS). The updates include new edits to capture information on social determinants of health and home health encounters and will be effective for data submissions beginning on September 13. Review the memo [here](#).

**OSHA Publishes Additional Work-Related Injury and Illness Data.** On September 4, the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) launched a [Severe Injury Report dashboard](#) that allows users to search its severe injury report database and view trends related to workplace injuries occurring in states covered by federal OSHA. The dashboard is searchable by year, industry, state, and establishment name, and includes data on severe injuries reported by employers covered under federal OSHA from January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2023. This follows OSHA's release in April 2024 of [injury and illness data](#) submitted by establishments from their OSHA Form 300A, as well as selected data from the more detailed Form 300 Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses and Form 301 Injury and Illness Incident Report. We encourage LeadingAge members to review these public data, to become familiar with what information is available about your organizations and, if needed, to review it for accuracy.

**Home Health and Hospice Providers Can Request COVID Test Kits from HHS.** LeadingAge has received confirmation that home health and hospice agencies are eligible to request COVID test kits upon request to the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). LeadingAge has confirmed with HHS that the program continues at this time and into 2025. Nursing homes, assisted living, home health, and hospice providers can request to be added to weekly distributions by emailing [TDX@hhs.gov](mailto:TDX@hhs.gov) and providing their shipping information. Any requests to increase, decrease, pause, or re-initiate shipping should also be sent to [TDX@hhs.gov](mailto:TDX@hhs.gov). HHS states that requests are usually processed within a couple of weeks of being received. HUD multifamily affordable senior housing providers can order free test kits through [this portal](#). LeadingAge understands how vital this program is for our members. We are grateful that the Administration continues this program and we [continue to advocate](#) for access to tests, vaccines, and therapeutics for aging services across the continuum.

**LeadingAge Partners with HHS on Risk Less. Do More. Campaign.** As cold and flu season approaches, LeadingAge is [partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) on a national initiative to reduce severe illness from common respiratory viruses in at-risk populations—including older adults age 65+ and those who care for them. Staying up to date with shots lowers the risk of getting sick with a respiratory infection, and we encourage members to check out the [Risk Less. Do More. campaign information](#) and use the [member toolkit](#) to help spread the word—and not the viruses! [Learn more and access the toolkit](#).

**2025 Call for Sessions at Annual Meeting Now Open:** Do you want to present at the 2025 LeadingAge Annual Meeting in Boston? Aging services providers and business members have the opportunity to share their original, thought-provoking approaches, ideas, models, best practices, and more with the LeadingAge community. [Mark your calendars for the December 9 deadline](#) and submit your proposal for consideration. [View guidelines and submission information here](#). The 2025 LeadingAge Annual Meeting will be held in conjunction with the [Global Ageing Network's](#) biennial conference.

**Last Week's Recaps.** Here is the September 30, 2024 Recap-[Medicaid HCBS and PACE](#)