



Nursing Home Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

December 11, 2020

Vaccine information and more on Monday. Leading Public Health Expert Dr. Joshua Sharfstein To Join LeadingAge Coronavirus Update Call on Monday, December 14 at 3:30 eastern. We are entering one of the most difficult phases of the pandemic and we have new vaccines and treatments on the horizon. Hear from world renowned public health expert Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Vice Dean of the Bloomberg School of Public Health, as he gives us his timely perspective on the next steps of the pandemic. As a former top official at the Food and Drug Administration, he can provide key insights into the science of the new vaccines, the hurdles in distribution and how we can expect the situation to evolve with the pandemic in the early parts of 2021. If you have not already registered, you can [join us here](#).

BD VERITOR TRAINING FOR LEADINGAGE MEMBERS. On December 17 at 3:30pm Eastern, LeadingAge will host another training on the BD Veritor COVID-19 Testing Device. Educators from BD will provide in-depth training on the system and provide real example and ideas for how to use the system in the most effective and efficient way possible. Register [here](#) for this free LeadingAge member training

Meeting with CDC on Pharmacy Partnership. We had our regular weekly meeting with CDC on the Pharmacy Partnership. Here is an [updated FAQ](#) with new questions and answers based on that meeting. Among the highlights:

- CDC does not require consent forms. They say the standard of care is to have a conversation with the individual being immunized and document it. Any consent forms those being immunized are asked to sign are required by either the pharmacy or the provider, not by CDC.
- There is a CDC long-term care vaccine toolkit coming out next week. A [health care toolkit](#) on best immunization practices was posted today. CDC staff recommend taking a look as it may answer some questions that come up before the LTC toolkit is out next week.
- Providers cannot be charged by the pharmacy for anything at all. Residents and staff cannot be balance billed. The pharmacy partner is responsible for billing Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance or HRSA's uninsured program.
- Information on side effects will likely come out of the FDA and ACIP meetings this week.

- The ACIP did not recommend including “independent living” in their 1A recommendation. People who live in independent living on a CCRC campus are NOT covered by the Pharmacy Partnership program.

AMDA COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit. AMDA, the Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine released today a [COVID-19 Vaccine Education Toolkit](#). The toolkit contains questions and answers about the vaccine, a template letter to residents and families, strategies for improving staff confidence in vaccines and other resources. You will need to set up a name and password to access the toolkit, but it’s free and quickly done.

National Academies webinar on Building Confidence in Vaccines. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine is offering a webinar on Friday December 18 from 11:30 to 4:00 Eastern on Vaccine Confidence. They will offer strategies for leaders to build confidence in COVID vaccines to promote uptake. More information on the free webinar is available [here](#).

CMS Proposed Rule on prior auth, data sharing and “reducing burden.” Late Thursday CMS released a proposed rule for payers that appears to cover data sharing, prior authorization and other items. The rule will ostensibly “reduce burden on patients and providers”. We are reviewing to see what the rule actually proposes to do and will comment if necessary. See here: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/reducing-provider-and-patient-burden-improving-prior-authorization-processes-and-promoting-patients>

Provider Relief Update: HHS tells us that they expect to get the Phase 3 funds out to providers in the next 10 days and will share more details later this week or early next week on the methodology they are using for those distributions. The October Incentive Payments for Nursing Homes started arriving Dec 9. Articles on the incentive payments: [How to Optimize NH Incentive Payments](#) and [October Incentive Payments Arrive Dec. 9](#)

Nicole continues to field numerous requests from members regarding why they did not receive a September incentive payment and responding as quickly as she is able to research the situation by reviewing NHSN data. HHS has not agreed to look at anymore nursing homes for this purpose. What we are seeing is that many of the answers can be obtained by reviewing the provider’s data in the NHSN database. These data errors if uncorrected can continue to disqualify a nursing home from future incentive payments until corrected. We are also hearing that NHSN response time to inquiries is as long as 30 days due to the overwhelming number of inquiries.

New Links and info from CDC: CDC shared several links with us today with vaccine information. There are still so many questions that have not been addressed, and maybe cannot be addressed until a vaccine is actually approved, but these may help providers in preparing:

CDC Pharmacy Partnership Program: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/long-term-care/pharmacy-partnerships-faqs.html>

COVID-19 vaccine resources for HCP: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/index.html> and <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/answering-questions.html>

Vaccine information for the general public: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

[Calculating SARS-CoV-2 | CDC](#)

[Ensuring the Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines in the United States | CDC](#) On this site, you can find information on **V-SAFE**, a new smartphone-based, after-vaccination health checker for people who receive COVID-19 vaccines.

[Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\) \(hhs.gov\)](#) The VAERS form can be found on this site.

[Characterization of COVID-19 in Assisted Living Facilities — 39 States, October 2020 | MMWR \(cdc.gov\)](#)

CDC Resources on Stress and Coping. CDC updated resources today on stress and coping. The main resource page can be found [here](#), and we wanted to draw your attention particularly to 2 links within this page that are of interest. The first is for [Coping at Work](#). This relates to a general work environment (or work-from-home environment). The second is [Coping for Healthcare Personnel](#). Both well-done and timely, since we are at the confluence of the surging pandemic in its 11th month and the December holidays, which are typically a time of year with increased rates of stress and depression outside of our current state of crisis.

Draft MedPAC Recommendations for 2022. MedPAC is set to vote on recommendations to eliminate Medicare payment updates for hospice and skilled nursing facilities and reduce the base payment for home health by 5 percent, as well as wage adjust and reduce the hospice aggregate cap by 20 percent when the Commission meets in January. More details are available from December's meeting [here](#).

CDC Toolkits. CDC updated toolkits to combat COVID-19 for [retirement communities](#), [older adults and people at higher risk](#), a

New CDC Guidance on Indoor/Outdoor Dining. As [restaurants and bars](#) resume and continue operations in some areas of the United States, CDC offers the following considerations for ways in which operators can reduce risk for employees, customers, and communities and slow the spread of COVID-19. CDC also updated their guidance on [ventilation](#).

New FAQs from CMS. CMS issued a new FAQ on COVID-19 testing. This document is [here](#) and can be found on the [CMS Current Emergencies page](#). It's not likely that any of this will feel like new information. Much of what is included in this FAQ has been discussed broadly (for example, the fact that providers can delay outbreak testing under certain circumstances until they receive a confirmatory test of the initial positive). The important part is that now we have this information in writing, which gives providers a bit of leverage when acting upon such guidance.

Information on Managing Stress for Healthcare Workers. Today the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response released information on [COVID-19 and Healthcare Professional Stress and Resilience](#). The articles in this issue of The Exchange focus on three categories: understanding acute and chronic stressors in the healthcare worker population, identifying at-risk employees, and promising practices in building resilience.

CMS Policy on Antigen Testing: CMS released a new FAQ related to [Updated CLIA SARS-CoV-2 Molecular and Antigen Point of Care Test Enforcement Discretion](#).

Guidance for Antigen Testing for COVID-19: CDC updated their [Interim Guidance for Antigen Testing for SARS-CoV-2](#). The purpose of this interim technical guidance is to support effective clinical use of antigen

tests for different testing situations. Changes to the guidance include: the word “rapid” has been deleted because FDA has authorized laboratory-based antigen tests; a new section on processing of antigen tests, reflecting what has been learned on how to minimize the risk of false results was added and CDC revised the section on evaluating the results of antigen tests, introducing a new testing algorithm, and reflecting what has been learned about the performance of antigen tests and the need to implement confirmatory testing.

Updated Guidance on Ventilation: CDC updated their information on [Ventilation](#). SARS-CoV-2 viral particles spread between people more readily indoors than outdoors. When outdoors, the concentration of viral particles rapidly reduces with the wind, even a very light wind. When indoors, ventilation mitigation strategies help to offset the absence of natural wind and reduce the concentration of viral particles in the indoor air. The lower the concentration, the less likely some of those viral particles can be inhaled into your lungs; contact your eyes, nose, and mouth; or fall out of the air to accumulate on surfaces. Protective ventilation practices and interventions can reduce the airborne concentration, which reduces the overall viral dose to occupants.

Vaccine Education and Equity Project. As the coronavirus vaccine becomes available, education and equity will be key to ensuring the public is ready and willing to receive the vaccine. LeadingAge has partnered with over 60 organizations on the [Vaccine Education and Equity Project](#), led by the Alliance for Aging Research, Healthy Women, and the National Caucus and Center on Black Aging. To address the skepticism around vaccines that exists among many people and in many communities, the project seeks to:

- Provide education on, and advocate for, adherence to a gold-standard regulatory review process.
- Promote the impact of widespread COVID-19 vaccination uptake in protecting individuals, families, and communities.
- Raise awareness around the importance of COVID-19 vaccination for public health, the economy, and broader society.
- Lead a conversation that helps ensure equitable access to authorized and approved vaccines through equitable access to information and dialogue.

[Learn more](#) and access materials to help you communicate about the vaccine at the project website.

AHRQ ECHO National Nursing Home COVID-19 Action Network. The AHRQ ECHO National Nursing Home COVID-19 Action Network is recruiting nursing homes from across the country to participate in a virtual community of practice for improving COVID-19 preparedness, safety, and infection control. To learn more, visit the [AHRQ ECHO National Nursing Home COVID-19 Action Network](#). If you have any questions, contact [Janine Finck-Boyle](#).