Home Health and Hospice Weekly Recap
May 7th, 2021

1. **Hospice Quality Reporting Program Forum**. On Wednesday, May 12 from 2pm to 3pm ET, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will host a webinar to share updates on the Hospice Outcomes & Patient Evaluation (HOPE) assessment. During this webinar, CMS subject matter experts will discuss the following: 1) HOPE background and objectives and 2) HOPE development and testing updates. CMS will answer questions at the end of the webinar as time permits. **Please register at:** https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/69595102441857038

2. **Post-training materials** are now available for the **Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP): Changes in the Hospice Item Set (HIS) Manual V3.00: What You Need to Know!** webinar that was presented on *Thursday, April 15, 2021.* Training materials include:
    - Presentation (including answers to knowledge checks): Document Download
    - Video recording of the live webinar: YouTube Link

3. **Don't throw away extra BinaxNOW cards with an imminent expiration date - UPDATE !** We spoke to Abbott and they filed with the FDA to have a longer expiration period for all lots of tests in the field. The FDA extended the expiration date for many lots of tests! Here is a list of lot numbers for BinaxNOW cards and their new expiration date – please check your lot number.

4. **New Telehealth Legislation Action Alert For Members.** LeadingAge national sent an action alert to all members asking them to urge Congress to support and pass key legislation that will maintain and enhance telemedicine and telehealth for providers and older adults. The past year has highlighted the value of expanded access to telehealth services and now is the time to urge Congress to support inclusion of telehealth services under Medicare. Members can take action on the alert at https://mobilize4change.org/NfFVsqy

5. **Trust For America's Health Releases New Report on Homebound Vaccination.** *Ensuring Access to COVID-19 Vaccines for Older Adults and People with Disabilities Who are Homebound*, recommends actions that federal, state, and local government, state and local health agencies, the healthcare sector and community partners should take to ensure that people who are homebound are vaccinated. The report is an outgrowth of two national expert convenings hosted by Trust for America's Health. Funding for the report and convenings was provided by The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Cambia Health Foundation. LeadingAge participated in the expert convenings.

6. **LeadingAge Update Call Fan Favorite coming up! What are the pros and cons? And will life be "normal" by the summer?** On **Monday, May 10,** we will hear from Dr. Monica Gandhi with her latest insights on what is happening with the pandemic. She always offers bold predictions and sometimes controversial viewpoints on what is coming next and we typically hear from members with comments along the lines of: "I feel so much better hearing Dr. Gandhi's comments!". Dr. Gandhi is a frequent commenter on COVID issues in the news; here's a recent interview with her from KQED. If you haven't registered for Update Calls and wish to, you can do so here.

7. **Rescue Plan OAA State Funding Amounts.** The White House announced that the $1.4 billion for OAA programs were disbursed to states and grantees this week. Read more here: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/03/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-delivers-funds-to-support-the-health-of-older-americans/. We continue to await numbers on how much each state received by program. ACL released by-state/by-OAA title allocations for the American Rescue Plan funding for Older Americans Act programs.

8. **New Edition of "the Exchange" by HHS features hospice, home care, and therapy experiences during the pandemic.** In the Exchange, ASPR TRACIE strives to share the most valuable, timely, and helpful information for you and your colleagues on the significant contributions made by supportive care providers and healthcare engineering representatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. The articles in this issue focus on three categories: home care and hospice (including a virtual acute care delivery at home model), the role of allied healthcare providers (e.g., physical, occupational, and respiratory therapy), and engineering and environmental changes in response to the pandemic. The articles feature authors at the regional, state, and local levels, who represent urban, suburban, and rural areas of the country.

9. **Workforce Legislation Introduced that Invest in Direct Care Worker Career Opportunities**. Today, Education and Labor Committee Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA), Rep. Susan Wild (PA-07), and Rep. Susie Lee (NV03) introduced the ***Direct Creation, Advancement, and Retention of Employment (CARE) Opportunity Act***, legislation that invests more than $1 billion over five years in training and increasing opportunities for our nation's direct care workers. The *Direct CARE Opportunity Act* aligns with a key piece of the American Jobs Plan, which calls for significant investments to meet the surging demand for home and community-based services. The *Direct CARE Opportunity Act* strengthens the training, support, and career opportunities that direct care workers need to care for millions of older Americans and people with disabilities.

10. **Bills Introduced on Citizenship for Essential Workers During COVID-19.** A bicameral proposal, the *Citizenship for Essential Workers Act* which would allow undocumented persons working as essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic to be eligible for a path to citizenship, has been introduced. The legislation (S. 747 and H.R. 1909) proposes that these workers receive permanent resident status. Individuals eligible for the adjustment of status under the legislation include those working in the nonprofit sector, or health care occupations, including home health care and residential care and home and community based services (HCBS). An article on the legislation, and other legislative proposals that address permanent path to citizenship is available here: https://leadingage.org/legislation/bills-introduced-expedite-permanent-citizenship-essential-workers-during-covid-19

11. **Fence-sitters and refusers – how best to communicate?** Dr.Vish Viswanath, an expert in health communications, joined today's Coronavirus Update Call. He indicated that people on the fence may, with the right strategies overcome their fears and concerns and get vaccinated. For people who outright refuse to be vaccinated, convincing will be much more difficult and may simply increase resistance. Read his comments here.

12. **Vaccinations as a condition of employment.** Andrew Banoff of Jewish Senior Services joined today's Coronavirus Update Call. As of this month, vaccination will be a condition of employment for all staff. He feels strongly that this is imperative to put the safety of clients and residents first. Read more about the logistics and consequences of his decision here.

13. **MACPAC Reports on LTSS**. The Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) recently published two reports on LTSS/HCBS. "Use of Medicaid Retainer Payments During the COVID-19 Pandemic" reviews how states used retainer payments during the pandemic as a form of provider relief for HCBS providers and highlights policy issues such as the relationship with other provider relief funding, the allowable length of time for retainer payments (currently limited to three 30 day episodes), and the use of retainer payments for a broader set of providers than currently allowed. The second report, "Examining the Potential for Additional Rebalancing of Long-Term Services and Supports," looked at state efforts to "rebalance" and tried to identify factors that contribute to some states still spending less than half of total LTSS spending on HCBS, asked what the federal government can do to promote further rebalancing, and specifically looked at whether any of the flexibilities available related to the pandemic help expand access to HCBS in states with less developed HCBS systems.