

Allies for Independence Washington Insights

Week of August 7, 2023

CAPITOL HILL UPDATE

Congress is out on recess for the month of August. We will follow up as the September work period draws closer with a forecast for the rest of this year. Please reach out if you have any questions.

ON THE RADAR

Administration Health Workforce Initiatives Draw Mixed Reviews

If you work in the long-term care space you are familiar with the Biden Administration's efforts to strengthen the health care workforce. While these initiatives are the first meaningful proposals to emerge from Washington in years, they are being met with mixed reviews from providers who have been battle tested since well before the COVID-19 pandemic.

One proposed rule is expected to set the number of hours staff must work per resident in long-term care facilities. If this proposal is finalized, long-term care facilities would need to hire more staff, which has proven incredibly difficult in recent years. This is due, in part, to persistently low reimbursement rates and low pay for physically and emotionally taxing work. It is not clear what kind of flexibility will exist for providers or when the rules will take effect, but this is of great interest across the industry.

There is also, in a separate rule, a proposed 80-20 rule, which means that at least 80 percent of Medicaid payments for personal care, homemaker, and home health aide services must be spent on compensation for direct care workers. The other 20 percent would need to be spent on administrative overhead, but stakeholders are concerned that CMS underestimates what administrative overhead entails for these providers. These two initiatives could be finalized this fall and are being followed very closely by stakeholders and Congress.

To be clear, there are several organizations that strongly support these initiatives and believe they will improve quality and access to care. We all share a desire to see more action in this space that will meaningfully improve access to care while strengthening the infrastructure for providers and direct care workers to receive higher wages. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Biden Administration to Establish Dementia Care Program

The Biden Administration announced plans for a new dementia care model titled, the Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience, or GUIDE. The model will help to address gaps in care for this population while strengthening access to support and resources for providers. With 6.5 million adults living with dementia, and the number expected to grow over the coming decades, CMS is building out the infrastructure to deliver care for this growing population with varying needs across the lifespan.

We intend to follow this model closely and encourage you to reach out if you have questions.

HHS Launches Long Covid Office

Last month, HHS announced a new office to lead government efforts to address and understand long Covid. The Office of Long Covid Research and Practice will coordinate across the government to scale up the federal government's response to Long Covid, closely aligned with the National Research Action Plan on Long Covid. The office will also support and operationalize the [Services and Supports for Longer-Term Impacts of COVID-19](#) report, which was published last year.

Long Covid and its connection to long-term services and supports is not yet understood, but the Biden Administration is signaling that this could be an area of need for this population.

CMS Allowing States to Continue COVID-era HCBS Waivers.

CMS recently announced that states can continue the HCBS Appendix K waivers past November 11, as long as they are added to the 1915(c) waiver programs. The HCBS Appendix K waivers allowed for states to expand where services were provided and allowed for payment flexibilities such as payment for family caregivers. CMS is looking for states to submit amendment proposals to CMS by November 11 for approval. CMS hopes that this extension will minimize any disruptions to beneficiaries, but there is some worry that states might not extend the HCBS waivers.

ISSUE OF THE WEEK: 700,000 Dropped from Medicaid in April

Across 18 states in April, more than 700,000 people lost Medicaid coverage. This is part of the national unwinding due to the end of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency which is expected to see as many as 15 million people lose their health insurance.

Of the 2.2 million people who were subject to renewals in April, roughly one million people had their coverage renewed, 715,000 people lost coverage, and roughly 500,000 renewals were still pending. The troubling data from CMS points to 80 percent of those who lost coverage did so because the state was unable to determine whether those individuals were still eligible. KFF's data was even more troubling as their data from 38 states found that nearly 3.8 million beneficiaries lost coverage.

HHS is urging states to work closely with stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition to other coverage for those no longer eligible for Medicaid, but not all states are expected to implement such strategies. We continue to closely follow this space and encourage you to reach out with questions.

ON THE HORIZON

The Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center Webinar: Lessons Learned from Community Collaborations for Employment (CCE) Grantees in Texas and Virginia

In 2021, Texas and Virginia received grants to help increase and enhance collaborations across systems to create a seamless experience for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) as they transition between school and work in the community. The Virginia and Texas grantees used their funding to focus on youth with I/DD in racially minoritized communities and limited English-speaking households. This webinar will go over what evaluation strategies these grantees used and how they can be applied to other programs.

This webinar will take place on Monday, August 14, 2023 at 4pm. [Click here to register.](#)

Resources for Integrated Care (RIC) Webinar: Promising Practices for Utilizing Motivational Interviewing (MI) to Improve Care Coordination and Address Social Determinants of Health (SDOH).

This webinar will explore the benefits of motivational interviewing (MI), how to promote the increased utilization of MI and how to encourage the improvement of member retention rates as well as health outcomes for individuals dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. The speakers will also address how to prioritize person-centered MI approaches, with a focus on addressing social determinants of health (SDOH), to improve member self-efficacy and outcomes in dually eligible individuals.

This webinar will take place on Thursday, August 17, 2023, at 2pm. For more information and to register for this event [click here.](#)

The National Alzheimer's and Dementia Resource Center Webinar on Helping Families Navigate Dementia with a Menu of Options

Next month, participants will learn about [Memory Connections](#), an ACL-funded initiative through Senior Services Inc. in North Carolina. Memory Connections is a multi-faceted project that offers support, creativity, education, and engaging activities for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

The webinar will take place on Tuesday August 29, 2023, from 3:00pm -4:00pm. To register for this webinar [click here.](#)

The Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) Webinar on Participatory Action Research with People with Disabilities

The ICDR is hosting a lunch & learn webinar on strategies for participatory action research with people with disabilities. This webinar will occur on Wednesday August 16, 2023, from 12:00-1:00pm.

[Click here](#) to register. Registration will close on August 9th.

SAVE THE DATE: ALLIES FOR INDEPENDENCE POLICY FORUM

On October 5, 2023, we are excited to host the Allies for Independence Policy Forum in Washington DC. This event will focus on key policy issues in the Education, Health Care, Workforce, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) space. We plan to hear from speakers, convene panel discussions, and provide opportunities to network.

Please be on the lookout for a formal invitation and reach out if you have any questions or interest in participating in this exciting event.

RECOMMENDED READS

- *Investopedia* – [Americans See AI Becoming Part of In-Home Elder Care Services](#)
- *Wyoming Tribune Eagle* – [Public input sought for Wyoming long-term care options](#)
- *NPR* – [Washington’s new tax could be a solution to fund long-term care](#)

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