

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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They said it

"For a couple of months, we were doing two to three hundred vaccinations a day — mothers, fathers, teenagers and babies. Even the grandparents wanted to get vaccinated" Erica Briones Chavez, a nurse in a public medical center in Mexico City's Chapultepec neighborhood on a massive measles vaccination effort in Mexico

"This is about common sense, compassion, and trusting patients and their doctors to make the best decisions for their care" W. Va. Gov. Patrick Morrisey on a new law restricting prior authorizations

"While concerns with compliance in these areas may exist during normal business hours, survey teams may gain a more realistic view of facility activities during the early morning or late evening time of day" From CMS memo directing survey teams to conduct off-hours and weekend surveys

US House Responds with Nursing Home Staffing Bill

A bill to mandate nursing home staffing at levels that exceed even failed federal regulations has been introduced by two House Democrats.

Reps. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Lloyd Doggett (D-TX) have stood side-by-side with union officials in advocating for nurse staffing ratios.

The Schakowsky-Doggett bill, titled the Safe Staffing Saves Lives Act, would boost the mandated minimum to 4.1 hours of direct care per resident per day.

That's in line with a study from the early 2000s and far exceeds the benchmark CMS set after conducting a new, in-depth study in 2022.

McKnight's, 03/30/2026

Surveyors Will Come and Stay Not Come and Go

In an update to a previous memo, CMS said survey teams "are expected to remain in the facility after entrance for a minimum of five consecutive hours" on the first day of any onsite inspection.

That means not conducting a brief entrance conference and then not returning until the next day or to not leave for an emergency response to an Immediate Jeopardy report elsewhere; or arriving on Friday, then not returning until Monday.

It also states that standard and abbreviated surveys *must* be conducted on consecutive calendar days from the day of entrance.

McKnight's, 4/03/2026

Weekends, Off-Hours Surveys And Earlier Starts

In a recent update CMS said it wants less predictable surveys and more after-hours visits and that visits must happen on consecutive days.

The agency changed the definition of off-hours surveys to those beginning either on the weekend, before 6:00 a.m. or after 5:00 p.m. on weekdays.

Additionally, the agency called for a minimum of half of all off-hour standard health surveys to begin on a Saturday or Sunday.

and asks them to be vigilant for situations that might indicate insufficient staff, infection control issues, Abuse/neglect, medication errors and not to wait for a resident roster to begin screening residents.

McKnight's, 04/03/2026

Dozens of SNFs Not a Priority – Now they Are

A January storm caused the largest outage in Nashville Electric Service's history, cutting power to approximately 230,000 customers across the Nashville area including 44 LTC facilities.

The utility's leaders say significant changes are underway after a comprehensive internal review revealed

gaps in its Critical Referral Program, which is designed to prioritize customers who rely on life-sustaining medical equipment.

Some of those critical shortcomings included the failure to prioritize dozens of assisted living and nursing home facilities during the crisis.

NES has now re-worked its priority list to include all LTC facilities.

WZTV-TV, 03/26/2026

Shift in Antipsychotics In SNFs Raises Questions

New research into antipsychotic medications for older adults has found that advanced practice RNs and physician assistants are writing prescriptions more than psychiatrists and primary care physicians.

Researchers found that annual antipsychotic prescription claims decreased from 10.8 million to 7.8 million for psychiatrists and from 7.4 million to 5.7 million for primary care physicians during the study period.

Over the same span, claims prescribed by advanced practice registered nurses or physician assistants more than tripled, increasing from 3.1 million to 9.5 million.

Study authors noted that the largest shifts from physicians to APRNs and PAs took place in rural areas. Urban areas saw bigger shifts from psychiatrists to APRNs and PAs.

JAMA Open Network, 04/01/2026

NLRB - Back Pay for Worker Denied SNF Job

A South Carolina nursing home must offer employment and back pay to a worker it denied job consideration over her union involvement. The company also has to reimburse any expenses she had searching for another job.

The National Labor Relations Board ordered those remedies from Oak Hollow of Georgetown after it failed to respond to a 2024 complaint brought by United Steel Workers Local 7898.

The union argued that the nursing home's administrator told prospective employees in 2023 that it would not hire them due to their union activity.

McKnight's, 04/01/2026

IN THE TRENCHES

Vaccines, COVID-19, Flu, Measles & Other Outbreaks Around the Globe

CALIFORNIA: A newly emerging coronavirus variant with signs of immune escape has been detected in California wastewater, offering an early signal that the virus continues to evolve even as **COVID-19** activity remains low across the state. The variant, known as BA.3.2, has also been found in a small number of patients and international travelers in the United States, according to a March 19 report from the CDC (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

AMERICA: Respiratory syncytial virus (**RSV**) was associated with 190,000 to 350,000 hospitalizations from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, as well as 10,000 to 23,000 deaths. During the same time, COVID-19 was associated with an estimated 290,000 to 450,000 (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: British drugmaker GSK said the FDA has expanded the approved use of its respiratory syncytial virus (**RSV**) vaccine for younger adults at risk of complications from the virus. The company said the FDA approved *Arexvy* for use in adults aged 18 to 49 who are at increased risk of lower respiratory tract disease caused by RSV. The vaccine was previously approved for all adults aged 60 and over and those aged 50 to 59 at increased risk of LRTD caused by RSV (*CIDRAP*).

NEW MEXICO: The state used a multipronged strategy to quell a **measles** outbreak last year in just seven months. The state paired public service announcements, built a centralized measles webpage, a nurse-manned hotline and social media posts to inform the public about the disease and vaccinations. The result was an 18% increase in child vaccinations and a whopping 291% increase in adult vaccinations (*MedPage Today*).

NEW YORK CITY: The first case of severe **mpox (formerly monkeypox)** has been identified in NYC. The Health

Department said one resident has tested positive for mpox clade I, one of the two main genetic groups (clades) of the mpox virus, which causes the illness which can be life-threatening. The victim was recently out of the country and apparently did not contract the disease in the U.S. (*Fox News*).

HAWAII: Department of Health confirmed that a wastewater sample from Kauai tested positive for the **measles** virus. Healthcare providers have been notified to remain alert for patients who may have symptoms consistent with measles. A confirmed measles case was reported on other islands on March 7, involving a visitor who traveled from an area of the continental U.S. that was experiencing a spike in measles cases (*HawaiiNewsNow*).

THE WORLD: Four doses of an experimental **vaccine** to protect against Lyme disease reduced the number of tick-borne infections by more than 70% according to Pfizer and Valneva, the pharmaceutical companies developing the shot. Pfizer said the companies are “confident in the vaccine’s potential” and plan to submit the data to regulators seeking approval. If successful, it could become the only Lyme disease vaccine available for people — although it would not be the first. (*The Washington Post*).

TEXAS: State officials have reported 28 more **measles** cases in the last two weeks, bringing the statewide total to at least 175 infections so far this year. The vast majority of cases are in a federal detention facility in Hudspeth County, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services (*The Texas Tribune*).

AMERICA: With 125 new **measles** cases confirmed the US total has reached at least 1,487 measles infections, and the outbreak is on track to surpass last year’s outbreak numbers—which reflected a 35-year high—before summer. The CDC reported the new data. The CDC confirmed 2,285 measles cases for all of last year, the most since 1991. Later this year – in November – the United States will likely lose its measles elimination status—which it gained in 2000 (*CIDRAP*).

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Vaccine-injury lawyer Aaron Siri, a leading anti-vaccine activist, is petitioning HHS to add more than 300 conditions to a table used for vaccine injury compensation claims — and is threatening to sue the agency if it doesn’t. Federal **vaccine** law has established a legal system to compensate people with vaccine injuries without bringing a civil lawsuit. Siri’s petition could be another test of the Trump administration’s willingness to accommodate vaccine controversy ahead of the midterm elections (*AXIOS*).

MEXICO: A sweeping **measles** outbreak has triggered a sweeping response — a campaign to vaccinate 2.5 million people a week. In Mexico City, posters are plastered with QR codes for people to look up the nearest spot for vaccination. Nurses go door-to-door, and there are pop-up vaccine stations in bakeries, bus stations, cinemas, shopping malls, roundabouts (*NPR*).

SWITZERLAND: Up to 60% of healthcare workers reported at least one long **COVID** symptom four years after an initial wild-type SARS-CoV-2 strain infection. Results showed that at baseline, 40.8% of infected participants reported one or more long-COVID symptoms. In total, 70 (37.6%) of 186 participants reported having long COVID (*Infection*).

EUROPE: The European Medicines Agency (EMA) is recommending that the antiviral drug *tecovirimat* (Tpxx) no longer be used for treating **mpox**. The recommendation, made by the EMA’s Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use, is based on four studies that have found that Tpxx was no better than a placebo to heal active mpox lesions, relieve pain, or help clear the virus faster (*CIDRAP*).

COVID-19, 04/03/2026

World Total Cases
779,177,817

World Total Deaths
7,113,407

U.S. Total Deaths
1,236,828

World Health Organization

SNF Flu Hospitalizations Drop with Antiviral TX

Rapidly administering antiviral prophylaxis – or giving antivirals to prevent illness before it starts – can significantly reduce hospitalizations among nursing home residents during influenza outbreaks.

The large study examined influenza outbreaks in U.S. nursing homes, with researchers analyzing 404 outbreaks across 318 facilities, covering more than 35,000 resident observations between 2018 and 2022.

The study focused on the antiviral *oseltamivir* – an antiviral medication used to treat influenza A and B.

Results showed that intensive use was associated with a meaningful reduction in hospitalizations within 14 days of an outbreak.

While similar although less precise trends were observed at 30 days

Skilled Nursing News, 03/30/2026

SNFs Falsely Cite Residents As ‘Schizo’ to Sedate Them

A report from the HHS OIG found that nursing home staff overdiagnoses their dementia patients with schizophrenia so they can prescribe antipsychotics in order to make the patients easier to manage.

The report noted that CMS developed a quality measure that captures the percentage of residents in nursing homes who receive an antipsychotic drug, which factors into a facility’s 5-Star rating.

But residents on antipsychotics are not counted toward the CMS quality measure if they have schizophrenia, which gives the facilities an incentive to label such patients as schizophrenic.

MedPage Today, 03/20/2026

Potential Changes for Virginia SNF Licensure

Proposed legislation in the Virginia legislature would require new operators to obtain a change of operator license before taking over the daily operations and management of a nursing home.

The application requires new operators to disclose owners with at least 5% ownership in the new operator, facility building(s), legal rights associated with the nursing home beds, and contracted service providers; disclose whether nursing home experienced issues including bankruptcy or license suspension, denial, or revocation in the last five years.

New operators would also need a bond of \$10,000 times the number of beds in the facility

JD Supra, 03/11/2026

Silver Lining for SNFs Amid Nation’s Uncertainty

Even though economic uncertainty caused by erratic tariff policies and the war with Iran are casting a “pall over the entire [US] economy,” skilled nursing operators have reason to take heart. That’s because healthcare is the only “meaningful” sector of the economy adding jobs.

It [skilled nursing] will navigate through these hard times better than most industries” said Mark Zandi, the chief economist of Moody’s Analytics.

Where skilled nursing has a leg up is it is not necessarily as affected by worsening housing market conditions that may hold up assisted living candidates from selling their homes to fund a senior living move-in.

Senior Living, 03/31/2026

‘Forced’ Labor Case Stays Alive in New State

A federal judge has declined to dismiss a case accusing one of the nation’s largest skilled nursing operators and a recruiting firm of conspiring to “exploit” foreign healthcare workers.

A District Court judge in Tennessee last week agreed to transfer the case to North Carolina, where two of three workers accusing PruittHealth and Infinity Care Partners of racketeering and other offenses were once employed.

The three foreign nurses first brought the case in January 2025. The case revolves around allegations related to pay and contracts offered to workers recruited from the Philippines and Nigeria.

McKnight’s, 03/31/2026

ONE COLUMN

W. Va. Lawmakers Pass Law to Curb Prior Auths

After a West Virginia man died of cancer following a protracted battle with his health insurer over doctor-recommended cancer care, Gov. Patrick Morrisey signed a bill intended to curb some insurance denials.

The new law, which will take effect June 10, will allow plan members who have been approved for a course of treatment to pursue an alternative, medically appropriate treatment of equal or lesser value without the need for another approval from an insurer.

The West Virginia law was inspired by Eric Tennant who died on Sept. 17 after repeated denials by his insurance company for a procedure that would have extended his life, but not cured his liver cancer.

Denials continued until two news organizations – KFF and NBC News – started asking questions. Only then did the insurer reverse.

Unfortunately, within one week of the reversal in late May, Tennant was hospitalized. His health continued to decline, and by midsummer he was no longer considered a suitable candidate for the procedure.

At least half of all state legislatures have taken up bills this year related to prior authorization, a process that requires patients or their medical team to seek approval from an insurer before proceeding with care.

The efforts come as patients across the country await relief from prior authorization hurdles, as promised by dozens of major health insurers last year.

Had the new law been in effect, Tennant could have undergone the procedure without preapproval, because it was a less expensive alternative to chemotherapy, which his insurer had already authorized.

The bill was passed unanimously the West Virginia legislature last month, six months after Eric Tennant died.

KFF Health News, 04/01/2026

Proposed Help for Mentally Ill in Nursing Homes

New legislation to increase the frequency of required Department of Human Services (DHS) follow-up visits for residents of Illinois nursing homes who have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness.

Introduced by Rep. Nicolle Grasse, the bill makes changes to the state's Nursing Home Care Act.

DHS follow-up visits on patients checking into nursing homes are required after 60 days, not 90 days; DHS visits are required after a significant change in a physical or mental condition; and DHS is required to remove the need for unnecessary conflict-of-interest waivers for pre-admission screenings.

Rep, Nichole Grasse news release, 04/01/2026

Government and Unions Tied to Lower Turnover

In a study by researchers at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, Cornell University and Weill Cornell Medicine. Union affiliation and government ownership both boosted the retention of direct care workers, including those employed in nursing homes.

Among unionized workers, the estimated probability of annual turnover was 37.4%, significantly lower than that among non-unionized workers (45%).

Public ownership also was directly linked to lower turnover (39.1%), compared with for-profit ownership (41.8%).

The lowest turnover rate of 33.6% was found among unionized workers who were also employed by nonprofit organizations.

JAMA Network Open, 04/03/2026

For Substandard Care Tennessee SNF Fined Millions

A nursing home company will pay more than \$2 million to settle allegations it billed federal and state programs for substandard care.

American Health Partners, agreed to pay \$2,090,309 to the United States and Tennessee to resolve claims under the False Claims Act tied to care at its former

facility in Hohenwald, TN between 2019 and 2024.

Officials allege the 131-bed Lewis County Nursing and Rehabilitation facility provided "grossly substandard" services, including failures in wound care, infection control, fall prevention, and resident nutrition, along with overprescribing antipsychotic medications.

The facility now operates under new ownership.

WRCB-TV, 04/01/2026

There's a New Health Care Advisory Group at HHS

HHS and CMS announced the formation of a new expert advisory panel that will make recommendations on how to modernize the U.S. health care system.

The 18-member Healthcare Advisory Committee will be tasked with advising HHS Sec. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and CMS Administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz on "ways to improve how care is financed and delivered" across Medicare, Medicaid and in the insurance marketplace.

Members will serve two-year terms and meet regularly throughout the year, with a focus on identifying policy solutions that enhance care, prevent chronic diseases and improve the quality of care, according to the agencies.

The Hill, 03/26/2026

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McKnight's, 03/31/2026

Briefly in the News

Republicans are considering reductions in federal health spending to help pay for a budget bill containing as much as \$200 billion to fund the Iran war and immigration enforcement. New efforts to rein in health programs are sure to be controversial and open the GOP up to election-year attacks that they're cutting health care to pay for an unpopular war. (**Axios**).

Although a federal judge in Boston has temporarily blocked the Trump administration's changes to the US childhood immunization schedule, the US Supreme Court could have two chances over the next year to weigh in on the decision. US District Court Judge Brian E. Murphy said the sweeping overhaul of federal vaccine recommendations by HHS Sec. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. likely violated a law that governs how public policy changes are made, as did Kennedy's firing of all 17 members of an influential immunization advisory panel (**CIDRAP**).

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a bill that gives low-income Floridians three more months of access to essential HIV medication. The bill funds the state's AIDS drug assistance program (ADAP), which gets medications to low-income and uninsured people living with HIV. Every state has an ADAP, and due to stagnant federal funds and rising health care costs, those programs have been struggling.

The American Geriatrics Society Beers Criteria strongly recommend that older adults avoid the concurrent use of ≥3 central nervous system-active (CNS) medications because of the increased risk of falls and fractures. A study using MDS 3.0 linked with Medicare Part D claims data, 211,783 long-stay residents were identified. CNS polypharmacy was common in US nursing homes, especially among residents with psychiatric comorbidity and in pain (**JAMDA**).

E-cigarettes are likely to cause cancer, including in the lungs and mouth, according to a sweeping review of scientific evidence that challenges their positioning as a safer alternative to smoking., the review concludes that nicotine-based vapes are "likely to be carcinogenic to humans," even though long-term population studies are still lacking (**Carcinogenesis**).