

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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They said it

"The Southern California region is a high-risk environment for hospice-related and many other forms of healthcare fraud" Akil Davis, assistant director in charge of the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office after charges against several hospice companies regarding fraud

"This new CMS initiative gives providers in certain models another tool — with necessary safeguards — to support their patients' needs through consultation about whether possible use of hemp products could help improve symptoms," CMS Innovation Center Director Abe Sutton on a new CMS hemp program

"The Rural Health Transformation Program does give us some opportunity to weave age-friendly care into the fabric of those rural communities, and we believe that will be a win for older people in all of our communities" Rani E. Snyder, president of The John A. Hartford Foundation on the government's \$50 Billion plan to keep rural SMF open

Hey Kathy, Political Rule of Thumb, Never Fight with Nuns

A 2023 law governing how residential long-term care settings in NY treat LGBTQ residents is at the heart of a lawsuit filed this week by a Catholic order of nuns who assert that the law violates their constitutional rights.

The Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne filed a lawsuit against Gov. Kathy Hochul and agencies within the NY Department of Health, challenging the state's LGBTQ Long-Term Care Facility Residents' Bill of Rights.

The nuns argue that mandates under the law goes against their Catholic faith, which teaches that sex cannot be changed or separated from gender, and which "compels false speech."

Senior Living, 4/09/2026

President's Budget Calls for \$100M in Survey Funding

Nursing homes would see a significant increase in survey and enforcement activity under a budget proposed by President Trump last week.

While Congress ultimately dictates national spending, the president's budget is a way to gauge the administration's priorities for the year ahead.

The HHS budget outlines \$1.4 million in possible cuts to CMS for fiscal year 2027, but one area increasing could be survey and certification spending.

The White House has proposed \$90 million in new spending in that category, for a total \$487 million, to "improve oversight frequency of healthcare facilities."

McKnight's, 04/07/2026

CMS Seeking More Info From Your Facility's MDS

CMS proposed requiring the submission of MDS data on all SNF residents receiving covered skilled care in a SNF, regardless of payer, for its Quality Reporting Program.

The agency's fall reporting requirements were recently adjusted to include payers outside of traditional Medicare.

It would align the SNF QRP with other post-acute care settings and CMS programs that already collect data on all patients regardless of payer.

CMS also said it plans to remove two relatively new measures from quality reporting including healthcare worker's COVID19 vaccination coverage and Vaccination percentage of residents were up to date.

McKnight's, 04/2/2026

Fed's New Program - Limited Apps for Rural SNFs

Organizations providing healthcare in rural America frequently cite the need for more senior care services and facilities, yet few states have prioritized skilled nursing care in their Rural Health Transformation plans.

At stake is \$50 billion in new federal funding.

Pennsylvania listed its rural healthy aging program as a "primary initiative," and only 15 other states mentioned it on their grant applications.

It may require states being more proactive, like Louisiana where state officials built their application with input from a 64-member taskforce. The state won \$208 million from the federal government for the program's first year.

McKnight's, 04/08/2026

Senators Urge CMS to Shore Up MA Programs

A group of Democratic senators is pushing CMS to rein in abuses from Medicare Advantage insurers as the Administration considers a policy to enroll more seniors in the program.

The senators allege MA is rife with waste, fraud and abuse, and CMS should focus on shoring up the program, rather than increasing enrollment.

They argue CMS should adopt the congressional MedPac recommendations to rein in the program.

The Democrats also say that CMS should protect patients from MA prior-authorization denials, strengthen network adequacy requirements and examine whether plans are evading medical-loss ratio requirements by buying up providers.

Roll Call.com, 04/02/2026

Trump Budget Request Seeks Huge HHS Cuts

In an outline for its fiscal 2027 budget proposal, the White House is redoubling its efforts to overhaul the Health and Human Services Department and cut its funding by 12.5%.

President Donald Trump is seeking to reduce HHS funding and revive last year's efforts to reorganize the department, chiefly by moving the 340B Drug Pricing Program under the purview of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The administration also wants to establish a new agency that would oversee health priorities currently managed by multiple agencies.

Modern Healthcare, 04/06/2026

IN THE TRENCHES

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

ATLANTA: Scientists familiar with the decision said the acting director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has delayed publication of a CDC report showing the COVID-19 vaccine cut the likelihood of emergency department visits and hospitalizations for healthy adults last winter by about half (*The Washington Post*).

THE WORLD: More than 2.5 million people worldwide were infected with meningitis in 2023. More than 250,000 people died from the condition, an infection that causes inflammation of the meninges, the fluid and membranes around the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis, which causes symptoms such as headache, fever and a stiff neck, has a mortality rate of about 18% (*The Lancet Neurology*).

AMERICA: Biotech startup ARMR Sciences Inc. said it has begun a human trial of its anti-fentanyl vaccine in an early study that could one day lead to a inoculation offering months-long protection from the deadly respiratory effects of the powerful synthetic opioid. The trial is the culmination of years of research. It aims to show that a vaccine, unlike existing emergency remedies, could prevent a fentanyl overdose from ever happening (*Bloomberg*).

WASHINGTON, D.C.: HHS is quietly laying the groundwork to revive a vaccine advisory committee whose membership and decisions were frozen last month by a federal judge. A document renewing the committee's charter for the next two years, published on Monday in the Federal Register, enshrines changes that would allow Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to nominate members of his choice (*The New York Times*).

MICHIGAN: Paramedics and EMTs, face a harsh reality in Michigan — shrinking revenue has left emergency medical service agencies grappling with multiple financial issues at once, with

staffing being their top expense. Despite the state investing millions of dollars in grants to train workers, staff shortages that began at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to strain EMS agencies, especially in rural communities (*McKnight's*).

NEW YORK: A year after staffing cuts, leadership disruptions and communication restrictions slowed the World Trade Center Health Program, decisions on whether to add new conditions remain unresolved, with no clear timeline. The program serves roughly 140,000 responders and survivors with cancers, respiratory illness, and other conditions linked to 9/11 exposure (*ABC News*).

AMERICA: The CDC has temporarily stopped testing for rabies and pox viruses, the family of viruses that includes smallpox and mpox. The C.D.C. offers testing for dozens of pathogens to assist state and local public health laboratories that are not equipped to conduct them. The organization began evaluating its tests in late 2024 as part of an agency-wide review (*The New York Times*).

FLORIDA: Florida aimed to become the first state in the nation to end all vaccine mandates. But an effort to change rules by the health department appears to have stalled. A watered-down version of an anti-mandate bill appeared in this year's legislative session but failed to advance in both chambers (*WUSF*).

THE WORLD: COVID-19 vaccination and boosting appeared to play an important role in protecting cancer patients against long COVID during the Omicron wave. Among the 76,807 patients assessed, 39,256 had SARS-CoV-2 infection and 37,551 were noninfected. The vast majority (93.2%) of all patients in the study had received booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines. No significant difference in long-COVID diagnosis or compatible symptoms was observed between infected and non-infected patients (*JAMA Network Open*).

AMERICA: Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination coverage among older US adults remained low through the end of the 2024–25 respiratory virus season. In 2024, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommended

RSV vaccination for adults aged 60 to 74 years who are at increased risk of severe RSV and for all adults aged ≥75 years (*Vaccine*).

SOUTH CAROLINA: The largest measles outbreak in the United States seems to be winding down. The Department of Public Health says the state has now gone two full weeks without a new infection. Also, no one in the state is in quarantine or isolation for measles at this time. There have been 997 reported cases of measles in South Carolina since the outbreak began last year (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: The CDC has posted online its first large tranche of advanced genetic data from measles viruses spreading last year. Scientists with knowledge of the operation expect the agency to post heaps more in weeks to come, revealing whether the U.S. has lost its hard-won measles elimination status. The CDC withheld the data for months as a team hit hard by mass layoffs and resignations sorted through the information (*KFF Health News*).

NEW YORK: Tops Friendly Markets of Williamsville, NY is recalling all codes of Christopher Ranch Peeled Garlic and Garland Peeled Garlic because it has the potential to be contaminated with Botulism due to the product being kept at insufficient temperatures. Consumers are warned not to consume the product even if it does not look or smell spoiled (*FDA*).

THE WORLD: Receiving a high-dose flu vaccine is associated with a significantly lower risk of Alzheimer's disease than a standard-dose vaccine in adults aged 65 and older, according to a large observational study. The findings add to a growing body of evidence linking vaccination, and possibly immune system activity, to reduced dementia risk (*Neurology*).

COVID-19, 04/10/2026

World Total Cases
779,177,817

World Total Deaths
7,113,407

U.S. Total Deaths
1,236,828

World Health Organization

New Program – Care Could Go Up in Smoke

A new Medicare pilot program that would expand access to hemp-derived products to some older adults is being greeted with cautious optimism by those in the senior living industry.

Some say the use of hemp might help providers address residents' pain, polypharmacy, dementia-related agitation, sleep and anxiety issues while enabling the federal government to study its use.

Through a federal optional incentive – the Substance Access Beneficiary Engaging Incentive, eligible hemp-derived products can be incorporated into care plans under clinician guidance.

The announcement aligns with a previous executive order calling for the rescheduling of cannabis as an acceptable medical use.

Senior Living, 04/07/2026

She's Preggo, They Fired Her, Case Continues

A federal judge last week refused to dismiss an EEOC case accusing Roland Park Rehabilitation and Healing Center in Baltimore of denying accommodations in violation of laws protecting pregnant women and civil rights at work.

The nursing home in January asked the Maryland court to dismiss the case, arguing the EEOC hadn't shown that the provider actually refused to accommodate Taniah Williams "because of her pregnancy."

The Judge wrote that Roland Park's motion "misconstrues the claims brought and mischaracterizes" the legal standards at play in the case.

EEOC news release, 03/31/2026

CMPs Just the Cost of Doing Business for MA Plans

CMS can and does levy CMPs against Medicare Advantage plans for things like inappropriately delaying or denying services or charging incorrect premiums.

CMPs for the largest MA insurers are capped at \$2 million, even though these firms earn billions of dollars in profits each year.

A study found that between 2010 and 2024, MA insurers in a sample received \$35.634 billion in civil monetary penalties, while earning \$59 billion in net income.

The study concluded that the small size of CMPs compared to plan profits likely makes CMPs an ineffective deterrent of MA program violations.

JAMA Health Forum, 04/03/2026

Indy Nursing Homes Owed About \$500M in Medicaid

Indiana nursing homes are owed \$462 million in back payments under the state's Medicaid program due to delays caused by the transition to managed care.

The issues stem from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act and changes to the PathWays for Aging program, which shifted long-term services into managed care and resulted in ongoing payment delays for providers.

Delays have occurred due to CMS not approving the state's payment methodology for the 2026 fiscal year. The payments, which amount to approximately \$1 billion annually, are critical for nursing homes, but two quarterly payments have already been delayed.

Indiana Capital Chronicle, 04/08/2026

FY'27 Medicare Advantage Payment Better-Than-Feared

The Administration has finalized a 2027 payment rate increase to privately run Medicare plans that was far bigger than initially proposed, a boost to health insurer stocks and seniors whose out-of-pocket costs may end up lower than feared.

The government will increase average MA payments by 2.48%, or more than \$13 billion.

The White House in January proposed a payment rate hike of 0.09%, which pummeled shares of insurers that run those plans.

Shares of UnitedHealth and CVS Health rose more than 9% in after-hours trading on Monday; Humana's stock jumped around 12%.

CNBC, 04/06/2026

ONE COLUMN

Aid-in-dying Laws Tough Decisions for SNFs

New York earlier this month became the 14th state with an aid-in-dying law on the books, thanks to a trend that is ushering in a new era for patient rights — and important ethical and legal questions for skilled nursing facilities.

Allowing dying patients to self-administer medications is a far cry from illegal physician-led suicide or euthanasia. But supporting aid in dying still carries significant legal risks for physicians and nursing homes that permit it under state law.

Also known as Deb's Law, the Illinois legislation establishes patient eligibility, request procedures and the responsibilities of the physician, a consulting physician and any involved healthcare facility.

Aid-in-dying is available only to adults 18 and over diagnosed with a terminal illness, a life expectancy of six months or less and the mental capacity needed to make the decision to self-medicate.

The terminal illness must be diagnosed by an attending physician following an in-person exam and then confirmed by a consultant physician, and all of it must be documented in the health record.

A chronic illness alone does not qualify Illinois residents for aid-in-dying protection.

In addition, surrogate decision-makers cannot make requests for the medications, nor can medications be ordered based on an advanced directive.

The individual wishing to end their life must say so personally twice, at least five days apart, and in writing.

The patient also has to be able to self-administer the medication; there is no physician involvement once the drugs are prescribed.

About 38% of people who go through the process of obtaining requested prescriptions never take them.

McKnight's, 03/03/2026

A Million Hours? You have Got to Be Kidding – Nope!

Providers could spend more than one million additional hours collecting and submitting data annually to comply with proposals included in the fiscal 2027 skilled nursing pay rule.

The bulk of that — roughly 964,000 hours each year — would be caused by CMS expanding its collection of quality reporting data across all Medicare payer types.

Currently, the SNF QRP system collects data only for skilled stays covered under Medicare Part A and captured in the Minimum Data Set.

Starting in 2031, CMS wants to require nursing homes to conduct and submit MDS assessments for all patients, regardless of payor.

McKnight's/04/07/2026

Dept of Veterans Affairs Shutting Down California SNF

The VA is set to permanently close its community living center in Livermore, California and relocate the resident veterans to other nursing homes.

Located at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System, the building is part of the 113-acre federal medical complex in Livermore Valley wine country offering primary care and specialty health services for veterans.

All 27 resident veterans in the CLC are set to be moved to “nearby facilities” during the next three months, including the VA community living center in Menlo Park and other community nursing home locations.

Pleasanton Weekly, 04/06/2026

Freedom, More Important Than Gov't Recommendations

In an experiment in which 907 participants were asked to rate their willingness to get a hypothetical COVID shot, many people concerned about vaccine safety responded favorably when researchers framed COVID vaccination as a way to maintain their freedom from disease and avoid restrictions on activities caused by illness.

People with vaccine concerns were 6.3 percentage points more likely to say they would accept a COVID shot if the survey listed autonomy as a benefit rather than government recommendations.

freedom also appealed to adults who believe misinformation about COVID shots, i.e., altering DNA, implant microchips in the bodies, etc.

CIDRAP, 04/03/2026

Proposed Medicare Pay Hike, PDPM Upcoding in Crosshairs

The CMS has proposed a 2.4% Medicare pay hike for fiscal 2027 and is developing ways to eliminate payment “creep” under PDPM.

The 2027 Skilled Nursing Facility Prospective Payment System Proposed Rule issued includes a new request for information (RFI) on substantive changes to the six-year-old payment model to address what the agency calls “case-mix creep.”

The RFI will attack areas potentially affecting codes and case-mix calculations.

It appears, however, CMS is considering a broader approach to assessing how much case-mix has risen than under the proposal.

McKnight's, 04/02/2026

Lawmakers Unsure Needs Of Louisiana Nursing Homes

A push to loosen Louisiana's moratorium on new nursing home beds has run into a snag — lawmakers are hearing contradicting stories.

Rep. Stephanie Berault, R-Slidell, has decided not to move forward with her bill to replace the moratorium with a parish-by-parish formula for determining need.

Instead, she secured an amendment to a bill aimed at studying the issue more closely that would extend the moratorium four more years.

At the center is a contradiction.

Hospital leaders in her district say patients are stuck because they cannot be discharged to full nursing homes, while operators insist they have open beds.

The Center Square, 04/01/2026

Briefly in the News

The Trump administration has opened investigations into admissions policies at three major medical schools The Justice Department on Wednesday informed Stanford University, the Ohio State University and the University of California, San Diego, about the investigations and demanded that the schools turn over extensive lists of data by April 24 or risk interruptions to essential federal funding (*The New York Times*).

Scientists at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health are working on developing mRNA vaccines that would work to fight cancer once it's detected. From a technological sense, they would work similar to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines that were developed to fight COVID-19. These vaccines would be considered “therapeutic vaccines” rather than preventative ones. When a cancer develops, a vaccine can be designed that targets some of the unique proteins and other things that the cancer cells show in the body (*The Hill*).

Fewer American service members died by suicide in 2024, with the number of deaths falling by 11% to 471 from a year earlier. The rate of suicides per 100,000 service members also dropped that year compared to 2023 (*Pentagon news release*).

Many Americans are gloomy about the future of Social Security. And they aren't keen on waiting until age 70 to start collecting it. In a study published by Northwestern Mutual more than a quarter of Gen Xers and 4 in 10 boomers said they will start payments as soon as they're eligible at age 62, even though their monthly benefit may be reduced (*Yahoo News*).

Older adults who received a high-dose inactivated influenza vaccine had a lower risk of incident Alzheimer's disease dementia compared with those who received a standard-dose shot. Compared with standard-dose shots, high-dose flu shots were associated with a lower risk for Alzheimer's dementia in the first 25 months after vaccination. The relationship was stronger in women than in men (*Neurology*).