

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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They said it

"While a portion of those individuals work in skilled nursing centers and other long term care settings, the loss of even a small percentage of these experienced caregivers would be detrimental to residents' continuity of care"

J. Emmett Reed, FHCA after asking Department of Homeland Security to exempt Haitians with TPS to continue working in Florida

"Providing the autonomy and the dignity and the choices that belong to you. You have earned the right to make your own choices" Minn. Gov. Tim Walz after signing a law that makes serving alcohol legal in LTC facilities

"Why would you repeat the damn lies?" u.s. Sen. Bill Cassidy to Sean Kaufman, a vaccine skeptic and the administration's nominee to lead the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response

House Committee Advances MA Prior Auth Bill

The House Ways and Means Committee has sent the *Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act* to the House floor.

It would require Medicare Advantage (MA) plans to establish an electronic prior authorization program that cannot rely on fax or proprietary plan portals unless they meet standards set by HHS to standardize and streamline electronic requests.

The bill also codifies important transparency requirements by directing MA plans to report prior authorization data to CMS, giving a clearer view of approvals and denials by item and service.

These data would help identify trends that delay access to care.

LeadingAge news release, 07/15/2026

Top Performing SNFs Get Bennies from CMS

CMS says it will be streamlining the review process for better performing nursing homes and also reward them with a favorable icon on the public-facing Care Compare website.

About 1 in 8 (12%) of nursing homes will qualify for the new risk-based survey beginning Sept. 8, the same month when the new icon will make its initial appearance.

To qualify a nursing home must have a 5-star overall facility rating on the Care Compare website, zero citations indicating harm or substandard quality of care in the last survey cycle, no recent ownership changes and accurate data submission.

McKnight's, 07/16/2026

Science Orgs Swamp OMB With Negative Comments

Comments have closed on the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)'s proposed rule that would require political appointees to review federal grants and halt those that don't align with Trump administration objectives.

Nearly 500,000 comments were submitted, many in response to campaigns from several science organizations that hoped to drown the agency with work to vet those comments in an effort to delay the rule.

Only about 10% of those have been posted publicly.

As of July 9, of the 51,047 comments that were posted, 94% were opposed to the rule.

MedPage Today, 07/15/2026

Cyclosporiasis, is Loose, Cook/Wash Your Veggies

Cyclosporiasis, a disease caused by the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*, has been confirmed in 1,645 cases as of July 13 and is under investigation in more than 5,100 others. Confirmed or suspected cases have been reported in 34 states.

CDC said a cluster of cases in four states – Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky – are likely linked.

Data from state health departments suggests the total number of cases could be higher than what's been publicly reported. In Michigan alone, officials are tracking more than 2,600 infections.

USA Today, 07/14/2026

There's a Hidden Workforce Right in Your Building

Researchers from Johns Hopkins University analyzed data from the 2024 National Dementia Workforce Study and found in among licensed staff assisted living communities 23% previously worked as unlicensed direct care workers.

Those figures compared with nursing homes, where 34% of workers were LPNs or RNs, of whom 47% formerly had worked as direct care workers.

In ALFs 33% of unlicensed direct care workers reported enrollment in a certification, licensure or healthcare degree program.

Consequently, researchers said, providers who view direct care roles as a stepping stone to nursing roles have the opportunity to create talent pipelines from within their organizations.

Journal of the Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medical Association August 2026
Senior Living, 07/09/2026

ACA Enrollment Nose Dived When Fed Money Dried Up

While New Mexico saw a roughly 14% increase in Affordable Care Act enrollments, i.e. Obamacare – it's the only state that replaced lost federal subsidies.

Ohio and Oklahoma each saw a more than 32% decline over the past year, according to an AP analysis of data from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Other states posting more than a 25% drop of their enrollees were Arizona, South Carolina, Minnesota, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Missouri.

Around 2.6 million fewer Americans had Obamacare plans in February compared with the same time last year.

AP, 07/06/2026

"When I was a boy, the Dead Sea was only sick."

– George Burns

IN THE TRENCHES

COVID-19, Flu, Measles, Vaccines, & Other Worldwide Outbreaks

UGANDA: The country discharged its last Ebola patient triggering a 42-day countdown that could see the country declared free of the virus. The wider outbreak, which the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a public health emergency in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in May, has caused 2,011 confirmed cases of infection and 754 confirmed deaths in the DRC (*Reuters*).

MARYLAND: Five cases of measles have been confirmed in residents, according to the Maryland Department of Health. Officials are warning anyone who visited the Carroll Hospital Center emergency department waiting room in Westminster on July 13 between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. may have been exposed. All five cases were in people who recently traveled together to a location in the U.S. that has an active measles outbreak (*Baltimore Sun*).

UTAH: has spent the past year fighting measles outbreaks — a grim milestone that could affect whether the United States can keep its measles-free designation. More than 680 people have gotten sick since the state's first outbreak began on June 20, 2025. Unlike measles outbreaks in Texas, South Carolina and Arizona, the spread in Utah has been tough to contain to one region — infecting under-vaccinated communities in nearly every county (*AP*).

WASHINGTON, D.C: A Food and Drug Administration advisory panel on recommended the approval of Moderna's mRNA-based flu shot for older adults. If approved, it would be the world's first messenger RNA flu shot, providing public health officials with a much more nimble tool to fight influenza. In a late-stage trial, the vaccine was found to be about 27% more effective than a standard flu shot (*NBC News*).

WASHINGTON, D.C: Outgoing Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard has released what she described as previously unseen

communications and documents related to the origins of COVID-19, research funding, and the alleged actions of Dr. Anthony Fauci. The documents, released as part of what the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) described as a yearlong declassification review, include internal communications, whistleblower allegations and intelligence-related material tied to debates over how the coronavirus pandemic began (*Newsweek*).

AMERICA: A study on COVID vaccine effectiveness that was suppressed by the CDC's acting director, Jay Bhattacharya, due to its test-negative design, has been published in a major JAMA journal. The case-control study showed that the estimated vaccine effectiveness rate was 50% against COVID-associated emergency department and urgent care visits and 55% against COVID-associated hospitalizations among adults. The numbers were slightly lower among adults 65 and older (*JAMA Network Open*).

TEXAS: With the outbreaks of flu increasing for trainees at Lackland AFB in Texas the Army, Navy and Air Force are once again requiring flu shots for basic trainees. At least 222 recruits, up from 159 the previous week had been diagnosed with the flu and four had been hospitalized. The death of one recruit remains under investigation, though it is not yet clear whether it is tied to the outbreak (*ABC News*).

CONGO: New suspected cases of Ebola have been reported in parts of Congo that were previously unaffected, as the death toll in the country's latest Ebola outbreak reached 600. The Congolese health ministry, suspected cases have now been recorded in two more provinces signaling the continued spread of the disease beyond the epicenter in Ituri (*AP*).

ATLANTA: The CDC is raising its Ebola response to the highest level as the outbreak continues to spread uncontrolled across Congo and Uganda. "Elevating the response level reflects the urgency, scale, and complexity of the outbreak, and allows CDC to bring additional resources to support the coordination and operational needs of our response," Satish Pillai, the CDC's Ebola response

incidence manager, told reporters (*The Hill*).

WASHINGTON, D.C: Thirty federal health service workers gathered last month at Joint Base Andrews in suburban Maryland to prepare for a trip to Africa, the first wave set to care for Americans exposed to a deadly Ebola outbreak ravaging communities across the continent. But participants quickly grew alarmed by what they described as a shambolic and hurried effort under intense pressure from Washington (*Bloomberg*).

AFRICA: It was no surprise that the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo quickly jumped across the border into Uganda. Citizens of both countries routinely cross over to do business and visit relatives. The surprising part is that Uganda's aggressive control methods appear to have stymied the spread of the deadly virus, in part by prohibiting people from hugging or even shaking hands (*The Wall Street Journal*).

ENGLAND: The University of Oxford has launched the first human trial of a vaccine against the Ebola virus seeking to accelerate efforts to combat an outbreak spreading in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. The early-stage trial, will evaluate the safety and immune response of the vaccine in 50 healthy adults aged 18 to 55 (*Reuters*).

NEW YORK CITY: The famed Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum was among a number of Manhattan buildings that recently tested positive for the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease amid the city's latest outbreak. The city health department on Friday released a list of 31 buildings on the Upper East Side that have been ordered to clean and disinfect their cooling towers as the city deals with the latest outbreak of the disease (*MedPage Today*).

COVID-19, 07/16/2026

World Total Cases
779,248,210

World Total Deaths
7,115,911

U.S. Total Deaths
1,238,563

World Health Organization

Association Asks for Exemptions for Haitians

The Florida Health Care Association worries that as many as 35,000 Haitian healthcare workers could be impacted by the Supreme Court decision.

The nursing home association asked the Department of Homeland Security to consider allowing Haitians with temporary protected status (TPS) to continue to work in long-term care and pursue “available lawful immigration pathways.”

Approximately 350,000 Haitian nationals nationwide hold TPS, of whom half are estimated to live in Florida.

TPS designation for Haiti began in 2010 following an earthquake that killed more than 500,000 people.

Las Cruces Bulletin, 07/10/2026

Scanning Barcodes = Insights Into Anticholinergics Use

Among more than 45,000 long-term VA residents studied over a 12-year period, scanning revealed one-third (33.4%) used anticholinergic medications.

Residents with dementia showed substantial exposure to neuropsychiatric anticholinergics, including second-generation antipsychotics (30.6%) and antiparkinsonian agents (10.1%).

Use of first-generation antihistamines remained high at 29.5%, with residents without dementia more frequently taking those, as well as bladder antimuscarinics (23.7%), and skeletal muscle relaxants (11.1%).

From FY2007-2019, anticholinergic use declined modestly, with decreases in antihistamines (12.1%-8.8%), antidepressants (6.8%-3.5%) and antiemetic/antivertigo agents (5.2%-1.2%).

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, 06/30/2026

He Got \$15K But Not Unemployment

An Iowa nursing home worker fired for allegedly accepting \$15,000 from a resident of the home has been denied unemployment benefits.

CNA and medication aide Gregory Reid worked for Grandview Care Center in Oelwein, Iowa from October 2023 until April 28, 2026, when he was fired.

Grandview has a policy barring employees from accepting any gifts, tips or gratuities from residents.

In the hearing, Reid said he did not solicit the gift or pressure the woman to give him the money, but indicating he knew acceptance of it was against policy and he could lose his job over it.

Iowa Capital Dispatch, 07/09/2026

Attorney General Probing Death In a Kentucky SNF

The Kentucky AG is investigating the death of a resident at Salyersville Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

The investigation revolves around Ruth Smith Castle Reed, 81, who entered the nursing home with a 10-inch surgical incision from back surgery and left a month later with an infected pressure wound the size of a dinner plate.

She died on November 22, 2024.

A May 2025 state survey, the first in four years, resulted in \$447,485 fines,

At least 11 lawsuits filed by families since 2021 have alleged abuse and neglect of residents who died — all of whom suffered pressure sores.

Lexington Herald-Leader, 07/06/2026

Omnicare, CVS Health Reach \$440M Settlement

Omnicare and its parent company, CVS Health, have agreed to pay at least \$440 million to the federal government to satisfy an almost \$950 million judgment in a case in which they were found liable for fraudulently dispensing drugs without valid prescriptions to residents of assisted living communities and other non-skilled-nursing residential long-term care facilities.

Omnicare and CVS Health approved the settlement with the Department of Justice to resolve its claims with the federal government.

CVS is to make a \$130 million payment within 14 days of the final agreement, with the \$310 million balance due by March 15, 2028.

Senior Living, 07/06/2026

ONE COLUMN

Feds May Ratchet Up PBJ Audits – 5 Pitfalls to Consider

With CMS under increasing pressure to ensure its audits of nursing home staffing data catch inaccuracies, providers could soon face more routine oversight and steeper consequences.

With that in mind here are five things to pay attention to:

Reviewing registered nurse hours. Verify adequate RN coverage throughout the reporting period. Facilities may be flagged by CMS for days with fewer than eight hours of RN coverage. Additionally, facilities with four or more days with no RN coverage during a quarter automatically receive a 1-star staffing rating. If regional nurses are used to meet requirements, he added, providers must maintain sufficient supporting documentation, such as time punches, schedules or other records, to substantiate hours reported.

Understanding mandated 30-minute meal breaks. Napier echoed a major concern underscored by the OIG. Providers need to deduct a full 30-minute meal break for an employee who is working an 8-hour shift.

Excluding remote hours. This rule was updated in June 2025, when CMS clarified that off-site hours are not reportable, even for nursing positions with administrative duties. All nursing staff must be available to provide direct care to residents.

Check employee linking and payroll company changes. Providers need to be knowledgeable if changing payroll companies or ownership, which can create issues with employee ID used in PBJ reporting. Missteps here can directly impact staff turnover percentages.

Weigh common hangups. minimize the number of employees working more than 800–900 hours per quarter and racking up “significant” overtime. “Employees with unusually high quarterly hours are more likely to trigger PBJ audits, as CMS may request documentation to verify that all overtime hours were properly compensated.

McKnight's, 07/16/2026

Honor Among Thieves! Cybercrook Avoids Hospitals

A cybercriminal group calling itself The Syndicate claims it breached Israeli fintech firm Nayax and stole more than 1 billion payment card records, while telling DataBreaches.net it steers clear of attacking hospitals.

The group said in the July 15 story: "We don't target hospitals or critical infrastructure, anything that directly endangers lives."

It said its focus is financial services, technology and retail companies with significant capital, and that it also avoids Commonwealth of Independent States countries.

The Commonwealth of Independent States is a regional intergovernmental organization formed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Becker's Hospital Review, 07/15/2026

NY Urged Not to Cut CNA Training Hours

The Long-Term Care Community Coalition (LTCCC) today called on the New York State Department of Health to withdraw its plan to reduce the minimum training required for certified nurse aides (CNAs) from 100 hours to 75 hours.

LTCCC said the Department has failed to identify any evidence-based rationale for lowering a long-standing standard for the workforce responsible for providing the majority of direct care to nursing home residents.

According to LTCCC The proposed change in minimum requirements would reduce New York's CNA training requirement by 25% returning it to the federal minimum established nearly 40 years ago.

LTCCC news release, 07/14/2026

Essential Caregivers Act Is Through Ways and Means

The Essential Caregivers Act has advanced through the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means, bringing the legislation one step closer to passage.

The bipartisan bill guarantees residents of long-term care facilities the right to

in-person access to a designated essential caregiver, even when visitation is otherwise restricted during an emergency.

The legislation responds directly to the devastating isolation experienced by seniors and individuals with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic, when families were generally banned from nursing homes.

It also directs CMS to establish clear, uniform safety guidelines so essential caregivers can continue providing care while protecting residents and staff.

NY Rep. Claudia Tenney news release, 7/14/2026

Didn't Assess a Resident Who Subsequently Died

The Iowa Board of Nursing charged Samantha Smith, an LPN with failing to assess a resident and committing an act that might adversely affect a patient.

Last December Samantha Smith, an LPN at Klein Center, allegedly failed to properly assess a resident who was choking. She told a CNA to put her to bed and placed a CPAP on her.

Five hours later another nurse discovered the resident struggling to breathe with a 34% O₂ level. She died before the EMTs arrived.

The Nursing Board has issued Smith a warning. Her facility received a \$10,000 CMP.

Iowa Capital Dispatch, 07/14/2026

In Minnesota it's Happy Hour For Granny and Gramps

Minnesota seniors living in LTC facilities will soon be able to enjoy a glass of wine or beer at resident happy hours without facilities navigating liquor licensing hurdles.

Gov. Tim Walz signed the measure known as the "Grandparents' Happy Hour" law.

The new law, effective Aug. 1, allows ALFs, SNFs and boarding care homes to serve alcohol to residents and their guests during organized social events, provided facilities notify the state and meet required safety standards.

Gov. Walz said the law is about giving seniors greater autonomy and removing unnecessary government barriers.

CBS News, July 14, 2026

Briefly in the News

Alaska's food assistance program had the highest payment error rate in the country for a fourth straight year last year, according to rankings put out by the Agriculture Department late last month. During the last federal fiscal year, which ended in September 2025, 23% of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients in Alaska ended up with significantly more or significantly less in benefits than they should have, according to the federal report. The national average was 11% (***Alaska Public Media***).

According to the New Jersey Department of Health, the heat wave over the Fourth of July weekend might have caused as many as 29 deaths. Pathologists must still confirm the likely heat-related fatalities, The New York Times reported. Also, extreme heat in Chicago likely contributed to the deaths of at least four people (***The New York Times***).

Frazier Healthcare Partners, a private equity firm focused exclusively on the healthcare industry, has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire MatrixCare. MatrixCare provides software solutions to more than 15,000 providers supporting skilled nursing, senior living and long-term care, life planning communities, and home health and hospice care. The proposed transaction, which is subject to customary closing conditions, is expected to be completed during the third quarter of 2026 (***Business Wire***).

The bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine, commonly used against tuberculosis, changed how immune cells behaved and altered markers linked to Alzheimer's disease in a pilot study involving two open-label trials. In a year-long study, BCG vaccination induced persistent, trained immunity-like changes in cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), including enhanced innate immune responsiveness, reported Steven Arnold, MD, of Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, and co-authors in Communications Medicine (***MedPage Today***).

The state House of Representatives passed a bill that would repeal the sales taxes on diapers and tampons (***Daily Tar Heel***).