

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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They said it

"Whether seniors are aging at home or individuals with disabilities need daily support, care should be accessible and affordable" Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI) in a statement on the introduction of a bill that would require Medicare to cover in-home care Under Part

"It's a serious area of discussion"

Dr. Robert Kloner, director of cardiovascular research at the Huntington Medical Research Institutes on the possibility that ED drugs like Cialis and Viagra may increase longevity

(Huh?) "An employer may not reduce withholding on wages to account for the qualified overtime deduction unless the employee furnishes the employer an updated and valid Form W-4 accounting for the employee's expected deduction for qualified overtime compensation" from new IRS guidance on a new income tax deduction for qualified OT

CMS Nurse Staffing Focuses On Rural, Underserved Areas

A CMS post in the Federal Register is an indication of how the agency's nursing home staffing campaign may work, including a previously undisclosed focus on rural and "underserved" areas.

The rural and underserved language has not been included in previous messaging about the program and along with the technical notice on the system CMS wants to establish, it may be an indication that the launch is imminent.

But the notice raised questions about how the program will ultimately unfold, including what areas will be eligible and how nurses and CNAs will be chosen and compensated.

McKnight's, 08/20/2026

SNF Audit Environment Escalates - Nobody's Safe

LTC operators are facing an aggressive regulatory environment where minor documentation oversights can rapidly escalate into multimillion-dollar liabilities.

That's the opinion healthcare defense attorney and former Medicaid fraud prosecutor Alyssa Friedman.

Friedman warned skilled nursing providers that government regulators are shifting strategies, using aggressive audit tactics to reclaim billions of dollars in lost funds.

The bigger the building, the bigger the target because of higher government spending levels, Friedman believes some areas could see a doubling of deeper audit activity.

The enforcement landscape for post-acute care has fundamentally shifted, driven by broader government initiatives to root out systemic healthcare fraud.

McKnight's, 08/21/2026

New Rule = Shorter MDS Window, Accent on Accuracy

Under the FY 2027 Final Rule, CMS is shortening the MDS reporting window from roughly 4 ½ months to approximately 45 days after the end of each quarter.

That gives providers just months to prepare their workflows, staffing and quality-control processes for a faster-paced reporting environment – and underscores CMS' broader push to ensure that MDS data more accurately reflects the quality of care delivered to residents.

SNFs should use the lead time to strengthen their processes, because missing required assessments, incomplete data elements, etc., can affect QRP compliance and potentially trigger a 2% reduction in the annual payment update.

Skilled Nursing News, 08/18/2026

Managed Medicaid Denies Prior Auths More Than MA

Medicaid managed care plans rejected an even larger share of prior authorization

requests than Medicare Advantage insurers last year.

A KFF analysis found insurers participating in federal programs denied at least 1 out of every 8 standard requests for prior authorization, including 12% of Medicare Advantage requests and 14% of Medicaid managed care requests, and 18% in Affordable Care Act Marketplaces.

The new data demonstrates the added barriers providers face in caring for patients on Medicaid – who account for more than 60% of patient stays nationally.

Some 42 states now have some form of managed care in their Medicaid programs.

McKnight's, 08/16/2026

Payroll Violations - Bankrupt SNFs Hit with \$35M Fine

A judge has slapped Comprehensive Healthcare Management Services, its 15 nursing homes and part owner Samuel Halper with a \$35.8 million judgment after finding an owner, on-site managers and a shared management firm "routinely" and willingly failed to properly compensate workers over six years.

But whether nearly 6,000 affected workers will collect on back pay and damages remains uncertain as several of the facilities are headed toward a bankruptcy sale next month.

the DOL estimated employees had been illegally denied around \$17.9 million in pay.

McKnight's, 07/24/2026

Analysis Suggests \$1 Trillion In MA Overpayments

A recent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) analysis projects that the federal government will pay between 5% and 10% more for Medicare Advantage (MA) enrollees than traditional Medicare (TM), and estimates that for a given person MA costs about 15% more than TM.

This suggests the federal government will spend something like \$1-trillion in MA overpayments over the next decade.

Although MA can often be more efficient than traditional Medicare, it ends up being more costly for the federal government

*Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget
08/20/2026*

IN THE TRENCHES

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

AMERICA: Post-COVID-19, dropping vaccination rates and conflicting federal messaging have created an opening for measles, widely considered the most contagious infectious disease known to humans. With schools starting officials are somewhat concerned. The good news is that most parents do get their kids the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine, which is 97% effective after two doses (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: With 101 newly confirmed measles cases nationwide, the US total has now reached at least 2,566 this year, the CDC said in its weekly update. This is the second straight week of about 100 new cases after previous weeks' totals were about half that. (*CDC*).

AMERICA: So far in 2026, the U.S. has recorded the most measles cases in more than three decades as outbreaks spread in multiple states, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data shows. By mid-July, the number had already surpassed all of 2025, which had been the worst year in recent history with more than 2,500 confirmed cases. Ongoing outbreaks have put the U.S. at risk of losing its official measles elimination status, which it has held since 2000 (*ABC News*).

MARYLAND: A former senior adviser to infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci has pleaded guilty to plotting to conceal federal records related to research on the origins of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. David Morens is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 12 in Federal Court in Greenbelt, Maryland. Morens pleaded guilty to conspiring to defraud the U.S. government, a felony punishable by a maximum prison sentence of five years (*AP*).

CONGO: During general remarks, Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, PhD, of the World Health Organization (WHO) said the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo is on track to become

the world's largest, outpacing the West African outbreak of 2014 to 2016, which saw more than 11,000 people die. "The outbreak had a big head start, it is still way ahead of us, and we are playing catch-up," Tedros said (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: The U.S. recently reached a grim milestone: As of July 23, more measles cases have been reported to the CDC than in any year since 1991. It took less than seven months to blow past the three-decade high recorded last year. This potentially deadly disease is easily prevented. Shots are widely available and, in many cases, free. Still, since the beginning of last year, more than 4,850 people here have been infected, and three have died (*ProPublica*).

AMERICA: The FDA gave an egg recall that started last month over salmonella concerns its highest-risk designation, meaning that eating the eggs could cause "serious adverse health consequences or death." Midwest Poultry Services voluntarily recalled 19 million eggs in July "as a precautionary measure," the company said (*The New York Times*).

NORTH CAROLINA: Lyme disease is expanding into southern Appalachia, and a town in the Blue Ridge Mountains appears to be on the edge of this growing territory. The CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* noted that 76.9% of the blacklegged (deer) ticks collected from residential properties in Biltmore Forest, North Carolina, tested positive for the bacterium-*Borrelia burgdorferi*-that causes Lyme disease. If left untreated, an infection can result in facial paralysis, irregular heartbeat, arthritis, and other long-term neurologic complications (*CIDRAP*).

ATLANTA: Cases of cyclosporiasis have topped 24,000, according to the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). There are at least 13,895 laboratory-confirmed cases of cyclosporiasis including 740 hospitalizations, the data shows. The agency is also aware of at least 10,455 additional cases that have not yet been laboratory confirmed. The rate of increase appears to have slowed, with only about 2,000 more cases recorded over the last week. The previous week saw more than 22,000 cases

recorded, a jump of over 10,000 from the week prior (*ABC News*).

CONGO: The country will receive 70,000 doses of the Ervebo vaccine, which has been effective in past Ebola outbreaks. It's a step seen as a major boost to efforts to contain what officials have described as the fastest Ebola outbreak in history. The single-dose vaccine is licensed for use against Zaire virus, but not for Bundibugyo virus, which is responsible for the current outbreak that has so far killed 2,476 people out of the 5,208 confirmed cases. Of those who contract Ebola, 47.5% die. (*WHO*).

FLORIDA & LOUISIANA: More than two dozen cases of a rare "flesh-eating" bacterium have been detected in Gulf Coast states, including Florida and Louisiana, so far this year. State health officials say 15 cases of Vibrio vulnificus have been confirmed in Florida and 10 have been reported in Louisiana. Additionally, seven deaths have been reported, including two in Florida and five in Louisiana (*ABC News*).

FLORIDA & LOUISIANA: Officials in Louisiana and Florida have reported a combined seven deaths among people who contracted an infection from a dangerous bacterium that can cause a "flesh-eating" disease. Vibrio is a group of bacteria that naturally occur in warm, brackish coastal waters. Most people become infected by eating raw or undercooked shellfish, particularly oysters, according to the Florida Department of Health Officials say people can also be exposed when open wounds touch contaminated water (*The Hill*).

MEXICO: FDA investigators traveled to Taylor Farms' operation in Mexico for the first time this week to start inspecting the facilities linked to the largest cyclospora outbreak in the U.S. (*The Washington Post*).

AMERICA: The best-if-used-by dates of recalled iceberg lettuce associated with the massive Cyclospora outbreak have passed. the FDA says that means that Cyclospora-tainted Taylor Farms lettuce should no longer be available at stores and restaurants (*CIDRAP*).

Unlike the Flu – COVID-19 Is Now a Summer Problem

Six years after the COVID-19 pandemic upended the world, experts in California say the disease appears to be becoming more of a summer rather than a winter phenomenon.

The shift was noted over the past couple of years and has become even clearer in 2026, prompting health officials to refocus their prevention efforts. The CDC says COVID-19 is growing or likely growing in 43 states at the moment.

The trend was obvious in California last summer. COVID-related emergency department visits peaked at 2.1% of all visits, while the winter peak was miniscule, maxing out at around 0.2%.

Los Angeles Times, 08/15/2026

Senators Warn of Coercing Staff Over SNF Voting

A group of 11 Democratic senators is accusing the federal government of threatening nursing home residents' right to vote, weeks after the issuance of new guidance appearing to limit staff assistance for patients.

The group urged CMS to repeal his agency's July 20 memo which softened some of the recommendations of the first Trump administration.

In an August 12 letter, the senators said the new guidance "may intimidate nursing home staff from helping residents exercise their constitutional right to vote and ultimately prevent nursing home residents from voting.

It also points out the potential for election fraud in nursing homes.

McKnight's, 08/14/2026

Prioritize Decolonization To Reduce MDROs

Multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs) are endemic in nursing homes, with studies showing more than 50% of residents carry MDROs on their skin.

Using chlorhexidine wipes and nasal products to decolonize the skin of nursing home residents has been proven to substantially reduce MDRO carriage and

subsequent infections, hospitalizations, and deaths.

Now a study conducted in two Southern California nursing homes found that only universal decolonization of residents was associated with reduced carriage MDROs and bedroom contamination, with daily enhanced cleaning providing no added benefit.

JAMA Network Open, 08/06/2026

Graveyard Shifters Have Higher Risk of Long COVID

People who work night shifts may face a significantly higher risk of developing long COVID.

That risk may rise even further among night shift workers who also have chronic insomnia.

Of the 1,899 participants during the two-year follow-up after infection, 283 (14.9%) developed long COVID. Most infections occurred when Omicron was the dominant variant, and most initial cases were mild or moderate.

Neurologic symptoms were the most common, reported by 54.4% of participants with long COVID, followed by muscular symptoms (30.4%) and respiratory symptoms (20.5%).

Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health, August 2026

Adverse Events Not Linked To Compressed Staff Schedules

There was no overall change in adverse outcomes among long-term care residents after the implementation of extended shifts within compressed staff schedules, e.g. three 12-hour or 4 ten-hour shifts.

With regard to adverse events, 13% of all users were diagnosed with at least one new diagnosis each month. The most common diagnoses were infections (3.6%), accidents (2.5%), depression (1.3%) and sleep disorders (1.1 %).

Researchers also found that, in the year prior to and post compressed schedule implementation, there was no significant difference in adverse outcomes among residents.

Health Services Insights, 08/20/2026

ONE COLUMN

Polio May Be Gone But Its Effects Linger On

Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell has explained his month-long absence from Congress as the result of a fall at home, caused by complications from the polio infection he survived as a child.

"Surviving childhood polio meant spending my entire life with mobility challenges," said McConnell, 84, in a July 12 statement.

In the 1950s and 1960s polio paralyzed up to 58,000 Americans a year. Thanks to the Salk vaccine, the disease was eliminated in the U.S. in 1979 and in the Western Hemisphere in 1994. Today poliovirus circulates routinely only in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Yet, today the poliovirus continues to harm nearly 300,000 Americans in the form of post-polio syndrome, an array of medical problems that occur decades after the original infection.

After years of health, 25% to 40% of polio survivors may suffer pain, renewed muscle weakness, fatigue, and problems speaking or swallowing. In some cases, people lose strength in a limb that had been unaffected previously.

In the U.S. most polio survivors are in their 70s or 80s. The number of people with post-polio syndrome is declining, as survivors age and pass away.

Around the world, the burden of polio is much greater, with estimates showing as high as 15 million to 20 million suffering post-polio symptoms.

In some ways, post-polio syndrome resembles a type of accelerated aging. Everyone experiences a gradual loss of nerve cells, as they age. Most people aren't affected by this loss until their 80s or 90s. But polio survivors may experience it in midlife.

Today there are too few specialists who know how to treat post-polio syndrome. And just as there's no cure for polio, there really isn't a cure for post-polio syndrome.

CIDRAP, 07/14/2026

It Was Always a PIA And Now It Is Gone

Recently, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) finalized the removal of the Healthcare Personnel (HCP) COVID-19 Vaccination measure from the Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) Quality Reporting Program (QRP) in the FY 2027 SNF Prospective Payment System (PPS) Final Rule.

As a result, nursing homes are no longer required to report calendar year (CY) 2026 HCP COVID-19 Vaccination measure data for the FY 2028 payment determination.

SNFs that do not report this data will not be penalized through the FY 2028 annual payment update under the SNF QRP.

AHCA, 08/18/2026

Bill Would Require Medicare To Cover Home Care

Democratic lawmakers have introduced legislation in Congress that would establish at home long-term care services benefits as part of the Medicare program.

The Medicare at Home Act would expand home care coverage under Medicare Part B.

While Medicare Part B usually covers doctor visits and everyday medical care, under the bill, it also would cover comprehensive home-based personal care benefits.

Home care providers reacted positively to the bill. The National Alliance for Care at Home also praised the bill's introduction.

LeadingAge CEO Katie Smith Sloan noted that "and families mistakenly assume is paid for by the current Medicare benefit."

McKnight's, 08/17/2026

Lightning Caused Facility Fire – 50 Residents Displaced

In Florida, fire crews from St. Johns County and Jacksonville responded to a fire caused by a lightning strike to the roof Sunday evening (Aug. 16) at The Blake at St. Johns, a senior living facility.

About 50 residents were displaced, mostly due to water damage. One person was taken for medical treatment.

The Blake at St. Johns, is a 137-bed senior living center that offers assisted living, memory care, and 24-hour nursing care to its residents.

About 128 residents and 75 staff members were in the building when the fire started. Other nursing homes provided housing for displaced residents.

WOKV-FM, 08/16/2026

Judge Upholds Minnesota's Labor Standards Board

A federal judge dismissed a lawsuit brought by Minnesota's nursing home industry, seeking to dissolve the state's nursing home labor standards board, which the Legislature created in 2023 to set minimum wages and employment standards.

The ruling is considered a victory for nursing home workers, many of whom will receive raises next month because of the board.

Minnesota's Nursing home associations argued in their lawsuit that the Minnesota Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board is unconstitutional and violates federal labor and antitrust laws, calling it an unprecedented "experiment in workplace regulation."

It is anticipated the LTC industry will appeal the ruling.

Minnesota Reformer, 08/19/2026

New IRS Guidance On Overtime Deduction

New IRS guidance meant to clarify changes to previous guidance for employers and workers who claim the new income tax deduction for qualified overtime compensation under the budget reconciliation bill signed into law by President Trump.

The law authorizes an overtime deduction for 2025 through 2028, providing for eligible individuals to deduct up to \$12,500 of qualified overtime pay from their federal taxable income each year.

This amount increases to \$25,000 for married couples filing jointly.

Senior Living, 08/18/2026

Briefly in the News

Tommy John has died. He was 83 and had been in hospice care. John won 288 games during a 26-year big league career and became the first pitcher to successfully return following ground-breaking elbow surgery that later was named for him.. The left-hander was 31 years old when he tore the ulnar collateral ligament in his pitching elbow in 1974. He allowed Dr. Frank Jobe, the Dodgers' team physician, to replace the ligament with a tendon from his right forearm. He won more games after the surgery than before (**AP**).

There's a new pancreatic cancer drug - an experimental pill that has been hailed as a breakthrough treatment for an infamous lethal cancer. Results from a late-stage clinical trial showed the medication could double the life expectancy of people with advanced disease and keep tumors from growing twice as long as standard chemotherapy. Called *daraxonrasib*, the medication is awaiting FDA approval but is being made available for free to more patients who qualify through an expanded access program (**The Boston Globe**).

More than 36 million people in the U.S. have Type 2 diabetes, and roughly 22% of them - or about 8 million - require daily insulin injections. Now that grueling regimen can be reduced to just one shot a week. Novo Nordisk announced that it is rolling out a weekly insulin injection for Type 2 diabetes called *Awiqli*. It is the first-of-its-kind weekly dose to reach the market, after approval by the FDA in March (**The Washington Post**).

By this time of year, both the FDA and CDC normally have weighed in on fall respiratory virus vaccine recommendations. The FDA has done its part, making recommendations about vaccine composition for influenza vaccines in March, followed by recommendations for COVID shots in May. But the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) hasn't done its part - it hasn't held its March or June meetings this year (**MedPage Today**).