

# IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals  
in 100 Words-or-Less

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## THEY SAID IT

***Medicaid underfunding is pushing facilities into financial crisis. "We need a significant increase in the Medicaid rate to drive employment and reduce these nursing home deserts"*** Stephen Hanse, president and CEO of the New York State Health Facilities Association

***"The health and safety of our residents, team members and communities is always top priority for the Acts organization, as it was during the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic"*** Acts spokesman after the senior living organization won a religious bias suit over mandatory COVID vaccination

***"Our 2025 policy priorities are proactive solutions that put residents and their caregivers first — without unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles that stifle progress and risk limiting access to care,"*** AHCA CEO Cliff Porter on the association's just released policy priorities

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## **Selling Fed Buildings – DOGE Says 'Never Mind' – For Now**

A list of more than 440 federal buildings identified Tuesday as nonessential was quietly pulled offline, a day after the administration announced plans to sell a significant percentage of federal real estate footprint.

The federal government revealed it is trying to offload "non-core properties" to downsize its property holdings, HHS and CMS buildings included on the list.

But by Wednesday morning, the list was entirely removed, and the webpage's heading was titled "Non-core property list (Coming soon)."

It's unclear why the list is gone.

Fiercer Healthcare, 03/04/2025

## **New Chapter Begins at Life Care Centers of America**

A Tennessee judge has granted sole permanent oversight of long-term care icon Forrest Preston's vast financial holdings to one of his sons, Aubrey Preston.

Forrest Preston is sole owner of Life Care Centers of America which comprises more than 200 facilities spread over 27 states.

In a brief hearing the judge found that the 91-year-old Forrest Preston is disabled under state law and requires a conservator.

The Preston family sought an emergency action in December prompted by behavior of Forrest's third wife, Kim Phuong Nguyen Preston, that Aubrey and company leaders called erratic, harmful and fraudulent.

McKnight's, 03/04/2025

## **Pipeline & Recruiting Replace Staffing in AHCA Priorities**

Strengthening the nursing pipeline and increasing staff recruitment — including of international caregivers — tops AHCA's policy priorities for 2025.

Those priorities bumped repealing the staffing mandate down a notch because that outcome appears closer to reality.

Titled "The Better Way," it aims to encourage the Trump administration and federal lawmakers to work *with* nursing homes on protecting access to care.

In addition to the aim of bolstering the long-term care workforce, AHCA makes it clear there's the need to protect Medicaid, realign Medicare Advantage practices with patient and provider needs.

AHCA news release, 03/04/2025

## **Operator Wins Religious Bias Vaccination Suit**

Acts, one of America's largest senior living operators has won a religious bias lawsuit brought by employees who were fired for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine.

In 2021, Acts announced a companywide COVID-19 vaccine mandate for employees. Those still unvaccinated after Oct 31, 2021, would be terminated,

subject to limited exemptions for religious or medical reasons.

Four former employees, all Christians, at Westminster Village in Spanish Fort, AL, filed suit alleging religious discrimination, harassment, wrongful termination and a hostile work environment.

The Federal court granted summary judgment to Acts, saying it was exempt from such claims as a religious organization.

Senior Living, 03/03/2025

## **Arbitration Lawsuit – Grandkids In, Sister Out**

Bonnie Townsend, acting as her sister Linda Elam's representative, signed an arbitration agreement with Richmond Place Rehabilitation and Health Center in Lexington, Kentucky when Elam was admitted.

Months later Elam died in a hospice.

Townsend, the sister, filed a wrongful death lawsuit, later amended to add Elam's grandchildren.

The facility sought to force the arbitration agreement and dismiss the lawsuit.

A judge has now ruled that Townsend could no longer continue in the suit, but Elam's grandchildren could.

The Kentucky Court of Appeals has now affirmed that decision.

McKnight's, 03/04/2025

## **New Jersey's Plan to Keep People Out of SNFs**

New Jersey plans to go statewide with a program aimed at caring for older adults outside of nursing homes.

State said it is expanding the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly to four more counties in the state that don't offer the program. PACE provides in-home and center-based services to mostly Medicare and Medicaid dual-eligible older adults.

The department said in a news release it wants potential providers to submit requests for applications for PACE programs in four counties - the last step in the state's goal of making PACE an option for older adults in every county.

Modern Healthcare, 02/14/2025

## **IN THE TRENCHES – COVID-19 & Other Outbreaks in the U.S. and the World**

**VARIOUS COUNTRIES:** Four countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria and Guinea, reported new polio cases according to the latest update from the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. GPEI also noted the identification of three positive environmental samples in Gaza, where a mass polio vaccination program is set to begin last weekend (*CIDRAP*).

**AMERICA:** While millions of vaccine doses are made using chicken eggs each year, experts say the current egg shortage won't hamper next year's flu vaccine production cycle. Previous bird flu outbreaks and decades-old public health infrastructure have led industry to protect the hens used for vaccine production. Moreover, flu vaccines that don't require eggs are available, and mRNA-based flu shots are in development (*MedPage Today*).

**AMERICA:** US outpatient prescriptions for *hydroxychloroquine* doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic. For *ivermectin*, the prescriptions went up ten-fold. The 3 million prescriptions for the drugs resulted in \$272 million estimated spending, and older adults were more likely to take these treatments (*Health Affairs*).

**CHINA:** The discovery of a new bat coronavirus in China has sparked concerns about another pandemic. The virus, named HKU5-CoV-2, is similar to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in that it targets the same human receptor HKU5-CoV-2 could potentially lead to human-to-human or even cross-species transmission (*South China Morning Post*).

**TEXAS:** The number of measles cases associated with an outbreak in western Texas has grown to at least 146. Almost all of the cases are in unvaccinated individuals or individuals whose vaccination status is unknown, with 79 unvaccinated and 62 of unknown status. At least 20 people have been hospitalized so far, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services. Just five cases have occurred in people vaccinated with one dose of the measles, mumps, rubella vaccine (*ABC News*).

**TEXAS:** Health commissioner told lawmakers they are still trying to determine the origin of a South Plains-Panhandle measles outbreak more than a month after the first patients reported symptoms. "I cannot link this particular outbreak," Dr. Jennifer Shuford, who oversees the Texas Department of State Health Services, told the House Committee on Public Health. "We don't know what the link is" (*The Texas Tribune*).

**TEXAS:** close-knit population of devout Mennonites has found itself at the center of Texas' latest measles outbreak, which has now spread west to New Mexico. Mennonites who live in Texas' Gaines County generally claim religious exemptions from vaccines. The majority of cases are concentrated among that community. But the Mennonite Church as a whole is not opposed to vaccines. Religious leaders have said there is no basis for religious exemptions, and some have even expressed openness to promoting the COVID-19 vaccine (*Newsweek*).

**Also TEXAS:** health officials in Austin reported the first case in Travis County since 2019, which involves an unvaccinated infant who was exposed to the virus during a vacation overseas (*CIDRAP*).

**WASHINGTON, D.C:** Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said in an opinion piece on Fox News on Sunday that parents should consult with health-care providers "to understand their options to get the MMR vaccine" for their children. Kennedy did not explicitly recommend the vaccine, but said the outbreak was a "call to action for all of us to reaffirm our commitment to public health" (*CNN*).

**AMERICA:** You probably don't remember what shots you got as a kid. Experts said it can be impossible for adults to remember the vaccine shots they received as children decades ago. In many cases, medical records can be hard to find. Start by asking your health-care provider if they have your vaccination records. You can also contact your state's health department. States, and some

major cities, have vaccine registries. But there is no national database, and a state's vaccination records may not be comprehensive for adults (*The Washington Post*).

**AMERICA:** While church attendance fell off during the pandemic, an October 2024 Pew Research study indicates that Americans have largely returned to church attendance as they did before. Pew stated that only 10% of respondents said COVID-19 had "a lot of impact" on their religious or spiritual lives while 69 percent said it had "no impact at all" (*AP*).

**THE WORLD:** Should you get a measles booster? the short answer is no, said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease expert at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. "The measles vaccine is one of our most extraordinarily successful vaccines" (*NBC News*).

**AMERICA:** Researchers at the Univ of Minnesota and Boston University looked at the death rates between 1999-2023. But the death rates for adults aged 25-44 had a sharp increase during the COVID-19 pandemic and remained "higher than expected" after the pandemic. The death rates for adults in 2023 were about 70% higher than they could have been if the death rates hadn't started to increase 10 years before the pandemic (*KMSP-TV*).

**AMERICA:** ICDC provided mid-season vaccine effectiveness data for the 2024-25 COVID-19 season. They said the current vaccine was 33% effective in preventing COVID-related emergency department or urgent care visits in adults, and it was 45% to 46% protective against hospitalization for older adults. The authors estimate that COVID-19 vaccination averted approximately 68,000 hospitalizations during the 2023-24 respiratory season (*MMWR*).

### **COVID-19, 03/06/2025**

**World Total Cases**  
777,504,802

**World Total Deaths**  
7,089,979

**U.S. Total Deaths**  
1,217,590

World Health Organization

## Many Older Adults Eligible for Second COVID Vaccine Dose

Last October the CDC recommended that people 65+ should receive two doses of the COVID vaccine separated by six months.

The vaccines were available beginning late August consequently many older adults are now becoming eligible to receive this second dose.

nursing homes are required to educate residents and staff on the risks, benefits, and potential side effects of COVID vaccines and to offer or assist with accessing these vaccines, including this second dose.

Nursing homes should ensure residents are up to date and protected through the summer months, when COVID has shown a surge each year since its inception.

LeadingAge, 03/04/2025

## Vet's Nursing Home Delayed By Lack Of Federal Funds

In October 2023, West Virginia officials broke ground at the site of a new 120-bed veterans home in West Virginia.

As of today, the construction is delayed because federal money has not arrived.

During a state Senate Finance Committee hearing Secretary Ryan Kennedy, head of the Department of Veteran's Assistance said, "They are telling us we will receive the money someday,"

Matching funds have been set aside, but the construction of the nursing home can't move forward without federal funding.

The Trump funds freeze in Washington, officials say they have no idea when the construction will begin.

Real WV, 03/03/2025

## Federal Cost-Cutting Could Affect Provider Credit Rating

The Trump administration's efforts to downsize federal programs such as Medicaid could negatively affect healthcare providers' credit profiles.

The House passed a budget resolution Feb. 25, but it's possible Congress ultimately will use a process

known as budget reconciliation to extend Trump's 2017 tax cuts.

If that happens, Congress "will need to identify major expenditures to offset the tax cut, such as Medicaid, to meet the budget neutral requirement."

LTC, drug manufacturers, medical device, diagnostics and products companies could see their credit profiles affected by federal spending cuts.

Fitch Ratings, 02/28/2025

## Launches GED Program to Help & Retain Staff Members

Piatt County Nursing Home in Monticello, Illinois is creating career pathways for its employees by providing in-house training courses to prepare them to take and pass the GED test.

Director Scott Porter got the inspiration for the facility's GED pilot program from his personal experience in trying — and failing — to obtain his GED several times.

He used his understanding of common work-life obstacles to craft the program in a way that catered to busy direct caregivers looking to climb the career ladder.

The first three employees graduated from the program in January. More plan to enter.

McKnight's, 02/25/2025

## Huge Nursing Home Is Throwing in the Towel

The 600-bed Cold Spring Hills Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation is expected to end operations no later than May 15.

New York's Department of Health recently signed off on the closure following approval by a federal Bankruptcy Court.

The Woodbury, NY facility began sending out termination notices to more than 10% of its 500 employees on Feb. 7. Those layoffs are coming after a potential buyer backed out of a sale.

The owners recently said in court documents that the facility was losing more than \$600,000 weekly.

McKnight's, 02/21/2025

## ONE COLUMN

### US Public Health System Needs a New Direction

Despite spending nearly 50% more on healthcare per capita than other high-spending nations, the U.S. public health system continues to lag behind dozens of countries in basic measures.

"When it comes to obtaining health for dollars, the American people have been shortchanging themselves," wrote Harvey V. Fineberg, MD, PhD, of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

The analysis reveals there is a health outcome disparity state-to-state for example age-adjusted mortality rates in Mississippi are twice those in Hawaii. Fourteen states experienced declines in life expectancy between 1990 and 2021.

Fineberg proposes organizing potential interventions into five categories: disease burden conditions, lifestyle behaviors, collective actions, underlying conditions, and institutional capacities.

Immunization was a standout success story in public health, generating between \$26 and \$51 in value for every dollar spent.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed ongoing challenges in implementation, with vaccine hesitancy potentially contributing to hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths.

Fineberg emphasized that successful public health interventions often requires sustained, comprehensive strategies across research, policy, regulation, education and direct intervention.

State and local decisions can dramatically impact health outcomes, creating what Fineberg calls "a nationwide laboratory for learning what works best in public health."

Looking ahead, the analysis stresses the importance of preparing for emerging health threats, from the effects of climate change to potential impacts of artificial intelligence, while maintaining focus on current public health challenges

JAMA, 01/28/2025

## **Coalition Wants to Know From Administration ‘What’s Up?’**

Many of the resources that operators have depended on to determine best care practices are currently in question from the Trump administration.

The Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition released a statement on Tuesday, pressing the Trump administration for a clear vision regarding how it plans to improve long-term care quality over the next four years and “realize a more humane, cost-effective, and comprehensive LTC system.”

It’s a call for support and clarity on the heels of funding freezes, communications pauses and federal workforce reductions that have threatened providers’ goal of improving nursing homes quality.

*McKnight’s, 02/27/2025*

## **Targeting Healthcare Workers A Recent Violent Trend**

A man armed with a pistol and carrying zip ties entered a York, Pennsylvania hospital’s intensive care unit a week ago and took staff members hostage before he was killed by police in a shootout that also left an officer dead.

Three workers at UPMC Memorial Hospital, including a doctor, a nurse and a custodian, and two other officers were shot and wounded in the attack.

The shooter was identified as identified as Diogenes Archangel-Ortiz, 49, who police said had contact with the hospital earlier in the week.

Health care is one of the nation’s most violent fields.

*AP, 02/22/2025*

## **EEOC Warns Employers Who Abuse Immigration Laws**

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Acting Chair Andrea Lucas vowed in a message Wednesday to take action against employers that are “part of the pipeline contributing to our immigration crisis or abusing our legal immigration system via illegal preferences against American workers.”

The acting chair said she intends to deter illegal immigration “and reduce the abuse of legal immigration programs by increasing enforcement of employment antidiscrimination laws against employers that illegally prefer non-American workers.”

She maintains that many companies violate Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits, among other things, discrimination based on national origin.

*EEOC news release, 02/19/2025*

## **Amendment Saves Standards Board From Chopping Block**

Two years after the Minnesota Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board was created, it was saved with an amendment to a bill that would repeal it.

The amended bill would keep the board intact while prohibiting a standard created by the board from going into effect unless the standard for nursing homes is paid in full by the Legislature.

The board’s duties include establishing minimum nursing home employment standards and standards on compensation for nursing home workers; recommending occupational health and safety standards; and investigating market conditions for wages and working conditions of nursing home workers around the state.

*Minnesota House news release, 02/27/2025*

## **Another State Considers Allowing “Grannie Cams”**

A bill that would allow families of residents in long-term care to place cameras in their rooms is once again moving through the Arizona Legislature. A similar bill died last year.

AARP favors it. But David Voepel, CEO, says the Arizona Healthcare Association is opposed, ““Because it doesn’t have any resident safety factors involved, it doesn’t have any waivers. It just says that health care institutions, nursing homes and assisted living communities cannot stop people from putting cameras in place.”

The bill was passed by a House committee by an 11-1 vote.

*KJZZ-FM, 02/19/2025*

## **Briefly in the News**

Army Lt. Gen. Telita Crosland, one of the most senior Black female officers in the Army, and head of the Defense Health Agency was abruptly retired the morning of February 28. A statement offered no reason for Crosland’s quick departure, but two officials told Reuters that she was informed that she must retire and was not given a reason why. Crosland is a West Point graduate and a 32-year Army veteran (*The Hill*).

A Connecticut legislative committee has raised a bill seeking to tackle the rising cost of long-term care insurance. The Aging Committee’s recently introduced proposal would create a tax deduction for people with these policies, would require public hearings for rate increase requests that exceed 10%, and mandate that the public receive advanced notice of the hearings (*CT Mirror*).

A mRNA-based cancer vaccine has shown impressive results in a small trial in patients with pancreatic cancer, showing that the vaccine can stimulate a long-term immune response that reduces the risk of cancer recurrence after surgery. New results show that the mRNA vaccines, in combination with another type of immunotherapy called an immune checkpoint inhibitor stimulated an immune response against proteins found on the tumor (*Nature*).

Researchers from the United States and Germany analyzed data from the German Ageing Survey. With over 14,000 people born between 1911 and 1974, the team asked: “At what age would you describe someone as old?” Interestingly, those in their mid-sixties believed old age starts around 75, which told researchers that we push the age limit backward as we approach it (*Psychology and Aging*).

The average 3.52% compensation increase reported in the Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service’s 2024-2025 Multi-Facility Corporate Compensation Report is a small decline from the 3.69% bump reported in 2023. Where the revenue was the highest — more than \$400 million each year — CEOs made between \$628,946 and \$919,056 (*Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service*).