

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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They said it

"It appears to me, although we haven't received this sort of formal notification, that all the old workgroups were disbanded when the new ACIP was put in place" William Schaffner, MD, of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, who has been involved with ACIP and its workgroups for decades,

"..... its [CMS'] relentless pressure forces many SNFs to halt antipsychotic use in cases where these medications are clinically appropriate or even essential" from report by Manatt Health on CMS discouraging psychotic meds in SNFs

"In a way, the silver lining for the pandemic was that it created more job opportunities within the system for low-wage workers" senior author Bianca Frogner, director of the Center for Health Workforce Studies at the University of Washington School of Medicine

Trend in Human Trafficking May Include the Elderly

Members of a Baltimore City Council panel recently were told of a human trafficking issue in which victims are not always sex workers and are not always female. It's called "benefits trafficking," which involves the targeting of older city residents.

The panel heard about a new focus this year over an issue of "benefits trafficking," which involves the targeting of older city residents.

"We're discovering older adults are being trafficked for their Social Security benefits, veterans' benefits, labor, sex, yes, sex, and possibly body parts," Jackie Schroeder, director of SAFE: Stop Abuse of Elders told the panel.

WBAL-TV, 11/24/2025

CMS Cuts Inpatient-only

Procedures - a Slap to SNFs

The federal government is moving forward with a long-planned effort to eliminate a list of medical procedures limited to inpatient facilities.

Per a 2026 hospital payment rule, just finalized, CMS said it will remove 285 procedures labeled inpatient-only, or IPO, many of them for acute care surgeries that have historically driven patients to nursing homes for follow-up care.

Importantly, the agency's Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment rule made no blanket provision for skilled nursing coverage for patients opting for outpatient alternatives that don't include a requisite three-day stay.

McKnight's, 11/24/2025

Illegal Unlicensed AFLs Skating By in Maryland

In 2022 Maryland leaders pushed for a sweeping crackdown on the state's booming unlicensed assisted living industry.

However, a recent TV investigation found that the state cannot quantify the scale of the problem, has referred just one case for felony prosecution since 2023, and depends on a complaint process that routinely fails seniors, families, medical providers, and first responders.

The state's second highest-ranking health official struggled to explain why Maryland continues to allow the operators of illegal assisted living facilities to avoid prosecution, remain open, or rebrand themselves as "supportive housing."

WBFF-TV, 11/25/2025

All Laid off HHS Workers Back on the Job

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has brought back everyone it laid off during the government shutdown.

A top HHS official told a California federal court that the agency's Office of Human Resources emailed the 954 employees who received reduction in force (RIF) notices during the shutdown, informing them that those notices had been rescinded and that they "should return to

work on their next regularly scheduled workday."

Those 954 employees were set to receive their retroactive pay for the entire shutdown period, from Oct. 1 to Nov. 12.

The Hill, 11/24/2025

Healthcare Satisfaction Up After Previous Declines

Employee satisfaction in healthcare and social sciences saw a slight increase from October to November following steady month-over-month declines since August.

ADP's Employment Motivation and Commitment Index tracks how people think and feel about their jobs and employers each month.

Transportation / warehousing and construction set records for employee satisfaction in November, rising eight points to 168 and six points to 121, respectively.

According to ADP, values below 100 indicate diminishing engagement and connection, whereas values above 100 suggest growing commitment and motivation.

Senior Living, 11/24/2025

Antipsychs? CMS May Be Dropping the Ball

A federal quality measure intended to prevent inappropriate use of antipsychotic drugs in nursing homes is restricting access to "safe and effective treatments" for many residents with Alzheimer's and related conditions.

A report published by Manatt Health found that CMS' measure of antipsychotic use among long-stay residents is discouraging the use of needed medications.

Outside of nursing homes, some antipsychotics are used often to help ease distressing neuropsychiatric symptoms that affect 97% of patients with Alzheimer's disease.

The report also said CMS has failed to keep up with the advent of new medications over the last two decades.

McKnight's, 11/19/2025

IN THE TRENCHES -

COVID-19 & Other Outbreaks in the U.S. and the World

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Dr. Ralph Abraham, who as Louisiana's surgeon general ordered the state health department to stop promoting vaccinations and who has called COVID vaccines "dangerous," has been named the second in command at CDC. HHS did not announce the appointment, and many C.D.C. employees seemed unaware of it. But the C.D.C.'s internal database lists Dr. Abraham as the agency's principal deputy director, with a start date of Nov. 23. (*The New York Times*).

KENTUCKY: A third unvaccinated infant in Kentucky has died of pertussis as public health officials urge Kentuckians to get vaccinated against the highly contagious disease also known as whooping cough. Kentucky's three infant deaths from whooping cough over the past 12 months are the state's first reported since 2018. None of the infants or their mothers had been vaccinated against the respiratory disease (*The Kentucky Lantern*).

AMERICA: More than 25,000 cases of whooping cough have been recorded in the U.S. so far this year, updated federal data shows. In 2019, pre-pandemic, about 18,600 whooping cough cases were recorded. Excluding last year, the last time whooping cough cases were this high was in 2014 when more than 32,900 cases were recorded (*ABC News*).

ATLANTA: The workgroups that form the backbone of the CDC's vaccine advisory process have largely gone silent. As the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices shapes the nation's vaccine recommendations, it relies on these panels of experts to sift through data and build the evidence that supports each vote. But in the wake of ACIP's reconstitution under HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., current and former members of those workgroups are expressing concern about the lack of communication and transparency (*MedPage Today*).

THE WORLD: Researchers said real-world effectiveness with the recommended single dose of respiratory

syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination dipped in older adults over the first 18 months, a finding that could support boosters for high-risk groups such as the immunocompromised (*MedPage Today*).

WASHINGTON STATE: Cocrystal Pharma expects to begin enrolling participants in 2026 for a norovirus challenge study evaluating CDI-988, its oral broad-spectrum protease inhibitor. The study is designed to provide an initial assessment of CDI-988 for both prevention and treatment of norovirus infection, a major cause of acute gastroenteritis and is highly contagious. It spreads rapidly in enclosed environments such as cruise ships, military bases, nursing homes, and hospitals. At present, there is no FDA-approved treatment or prevention for norovirus infection (*BioSpace*).

AMERICA: In updated data from the CDC, cases of norovirus are rising across the United States doubling over last few months. Nearly 14% of tests came back positive for norovirus during the most recent week ending Nov. 15, compared to roughly 7% about three months ago. Test positivity is a metric used to identify how many people are confirmed to have norovirus after an illness is suspected (*ABC News*).

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nearly 6,000 children in Spartanburg County schools last year — 10% of the total enrollment — either received an exemption allowing them to forgo required vaccinations or did not meet vaccine requirements. The county has been fighting a measles outbreak since early October, with more than 50 cases identified. A spokesman for the regional health system said the county's low vaccination rate is tied to misinformation not only published on social media but also spread by "a variety of nonmedical leaders over the years" (*KFF Health News*).

THE WORLD: An analysis published in Contemporary Economic Policy suggests that COVID-19 indoor vaccine mandates in major US cities didn't increase weekly vaccination rates or reduce infections and deaths in adults or children, despite their success in countries such as Canada and France (*CIDRAP*).

ONE COLUMN

Medicaid Spending and Enrollment – Part 2

In the 25th annual survey of Medicaid directors, most officials indicated their spending projections reflect what is assumed in their states' adopted budgets and do not account for the recently passed reconciliation law.

Medicaid enrollment declined by 7.6% in FY 2025, driven primarily by the unwinding of the continuous enrollment provision. The completion of unwinding renewals as well as competing upward and downward enrollment pressures are expected to result in flat Medicaid enrollment growth (0.2%) in FY 2026.

Total Medicaid spending growth was 8.6% in FY 2025 and is expected to slow slightly (7.9%) in FY 2026. States are experiencing several significant upward expenditure pressures that outweigh the downward pressure from Medicaid enrollment trends, including rate increases, higher health care needs among enrollees post-unwinding, and increasing long-term care, pharmacy, and behavioral health care costs.

State Medicaid spending growth was 12.2% in FY 2025 and is projected to slow to 8.5% in FY 2026, similar to total spending growth levels and marking the end of shifts caused by pandemic-era enhanced federal funding. While most of the state (or non-federal) share of Medicaid spending comes from state general funds, there is considerable variation in how much states rely on other non-federal share funding sources and how they account for those other funding sources.

Almost two-thirds of responding states at the time of the survey thought the chance of a Medicaid budget shortfall in FY 2026 was "50-50", "likely", or "almost certain." A few states are implementing Medicaid spending cuts to address recent budget challenges, and other states may follow as they contend with potential Medicaid budget gaps and look ahead to the implementation of the Medicaid changes in H.R.1.