

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

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THEY SAID IT

"The literature is crystal clear that quality of life and quality of care are related to staffing, and that doesn't just mean the number of staff" Alice Bonner, chair of the Moving Forward Coalition

"VBP programs drive excellence in quality and improved resident outcomes by creating work environments where long-term care staff are provided improved compensation as being part of a high-performing team," Jason Speaks, LeadingAge Illinois' director of government relations

"We want to put them in trauma"

Russell Vought, head of Office of Management and Budget on cuts in various government agencies

One Bad Apple – Now All May Get the Evil Eye

Three Virginia members of Congress are urging CMS to more closely scrutinize skilled nursing facilities, including one nursing home that has had a history of adverse allegations that allegedly occurred last year at the Colonial Heights Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Colonial Heights, VA.

In December 2024, 18 workers at Colonial were charged with crimes ranging from neglect to falsifying documents in an attempt to defraud in connection to a 74-year-old resident's death in October.

Financial analysts identified "extremely unusual and large" related-party transactions at Colonial Heights, possibly pointing to accurate company costs being concealed.

McKnight's, 4/24/2025

GOP Asking DOJ to Prosecute Cuomo for Lying

House Republicans have asked Attorney General Pam Bondi to charge former NY Gov. Andrew Cuomo for making "criminally false statements" to Congress by low-balling nursing home deaths during the pandemic.

The House Oversight Committee rekindled the criminal referral after then-AG Merrick Garland declined to prosecute Cuomo for his involvement in a report that found NY had understated the total number of senior care deaths by 46%.

"Andrew Cuomo is a man with a history of corruption and deceit, now caught red-handed lying to Congress' investigation into the COVID-19 nursing home tragedy in New York," said Oversight Chairman James Comer (R-Ky.)

NY Post, 04/21/2025

'Green Backs' to Push SNFs Into Better Staffing

In 2021, CMS set a goal of having all Medicare beneficiaries in some type of value-based care relationship by 2030.

State governments are increasingly turning to a familiar resource to push nursing homes toward better staffing: cash in the form of payment incentives.

Nine states have enacted an incentive-based approach. But four – Illinois, Maine, Ohio and New Jersey are using incentives in Medicaid as a direct way of bolstering staffing levels.

An Illinois provider advocacy organization said this method of acquiring talent has many benefits, including combating a one-size-fits-all-funding approach, shown to be ineffective in driving quality care in SNFs.

McKnight's, 04/23/2025

Anti-Immigration Policies Could Hogtie Home Care

Since taking office, President Donald Trump has cracked down on immigration and launched sweeping deportation campaigns across the US.

A KFF study found that immigrants make up 28% of the workers in long-term care,

or about 820,000 immigrant workers in total. About 500,000 were naturalized citizens while the rest were noncitizen immigrants.

Immigrants make up 21% of the workers in nursing facilities, 24% of the workers in residential care and 32% of the workers in home care.

Given home care's heavy reliance on immigrant workers, it may be particularly vulnerable to staffing shortages because of anti-immigration policies,

KFF, 4/8/2025

Help Tackling Nursing Home Emergency Responses

Oregon's Department of Human Services issued \$2.35 million dollars in funding to jumpstart local pilot projects including initiatives to improve emergency services for long-term care residents.

Each initiative under the program is geared toward mastering greater crises responses involving state seniors.

Because of it, providers are getting help with things such as falls prevention and lift training, and greater involvement by public emergency first responders.

With new legislation, lawmakers are now hoping to expand on those efforts.

McKnight's, 04/17/2025

Duh! Stress Went Up During COVID and Down Afterwards

A study of health care workers at the Veterans Health Administration determined that burnout rates for the pandemic years were - 30.9%(2020), 35.4% (2021) 39.8%(2022) and 35.4% in 2023.

Rates of professional stress from COVID-19 were 32.0% for 2020, 26.9% for 2021, 29.2% for 2022, and 21.4% for 2023.

Primary care physicians reported the highest burnout levels compared with other service areas, ranging from 46.2% in 2018 to 57.6% in 2022.

Both measures showed a decrease following the official public health emergency ending in 2023.

JAMA Network Open, 04/21/2025

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

AMERICA: COVID-19 infection was linked to a higher risk of new-onset mild and moderate chronic kidney disease (CKD) in US children and adolescents from 2020 to 2023. Results of this study suggest that SARS-CoV-2 infection is associated with an increased risk of adverse kidney outcomes, including new-onset CKD and worsening kidney function, particularly among children with preexisting CKD or acute-phase AKI (*JAMA Network Open*).

AMERICA: The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 84 more measles cases, boosting the national total to 884 – 97% unvaccinated – keeping the nation on pace to experience its worst year since the nation eliminated the disease in 2000 (*CDC*).

THE WORLD: New studies on respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in both adults and young children show that infections are linked to a higher risk of death in adults, and children born prematurely or with pulmonary or neurologic conditions are at greater risk of severe RSV infections. Recently researchers presented new data showing that adults with RSV acute respiratory infections face a 2.7-fold higher risk of death within 1 year of infection (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: A majority of the CDC's work group on COVID-19 vaccines now supports ending the agency's pandemic-era recommendation for virtually all Americans to get vaccinated against the virus each year. Instead of the agency's longstanding "universal" recommendation, most of the CDC's advisers and health officials favor shifting to guidance based on people's individual risk of more severe disease (*CBS News*).

THE WORLD: Researchers have estimated approximately 8% of Americas have ever experienced long COVID, or lasting symptoms, following an acute COVID-19 infection. Now two recent international studies suggest that the percentage is much higher among healthcare workers and dental professionals. ... Globally, HCWs have been at an increased risk for COVID-19 infections since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, due to both exposure

to the virus and work conducted in a high-stress environment that may exacerbate the risk of long-term post-viral symptoms (*CIDRAP*).

AMERICA: The CDC said a large number of measles cases are being missed by health authorities. The agency is now struggling to keep up with requests for support from states responding to outbreaks. A senior scientist said the cases are either not reported or underreported (*CBS News*).

CALIFORNIA: Orange County health officials warned the public after a bat that was found at a park last week tested positive for rabies. The bat, which was discovered on the ground near a walking path at Rancho Santa Margarita Lake on Thursday, April 17 (*CBS News*).

THE WORLD: A single dose of the antiviral baloxavir marboxil (Xofluza) led to a lower incidence of influenza virus transmission to household contacts compared with placebo. Five days after receiving the intervention, the adjusted incidence of transmission of laboratory-confirmed influenza was 9.5% with baloxavir compared with 13.4% with placebo, resulting in an adjusted relative risk reduction of 29% (*MedPage Today*).

COLORADO: A new case of measles has been confirmed, the fourth one in the state this year. But the state's top doctor earlier in the week expressed optimism about the overall measles situation in Colorado, noting that all the cases so far appear to have fizzled out, vaccinations are increasing and health care providers are more alert to the possibility of seeing an infection (*The Colorado Sun*).

AMERICA: Novavax's closely watched COVID-19 vaccine is on track for full approval after additional discussions with the FDA. The news sent company shares soaring more than 21% in morning trading and appeared to resolve concerns that Trump administration officials might be holding up a decision on the shot. Novavax, the nation's only traditional protein-based COVID-19 vaccine, is still being sold under emergency use authorization (*AP*).

CHINA: A study on the post-mortem infectivity of influenza A virus (IAV), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in euthanized mice tissues suggests persistent contagiousness ranging from a few hours for flu to a week or more for COVID. Chinese researchers collected tissue samples from virus-infected mouse cadavers (*Journal of Infection*).

MICHIGAN: A second 1-year-old in Ingham County has been infected with measles, health officials confirmed. The Ingham County Health Department said the infected boy had been exposed to a 1-year-old girl whose infection was confirmed earlier this month (*The Detroit News*).

ILLINOIS: the first case of measles has been confirmed in the state. The measles diagnosis involving an adult in far southern Illinois was confirmed through laboratory testing, according to a press release sent out by IDPH. This is the only IDPH-confirmed case in the state. (*Capitol News Illinois*).

TEXAS: A middle schooler in the Dallas-Fort Worth area has tested positive for measles, the first known case in the urban area. The young person is located in Lucas, about 30 miles north of Dallas. The Lovejoy Independent School District reported 96% of seventh graders were vaccinated for measles in the 2023-2024 school year (*Bloomberg*).

AMERICA: Driving with a case of COVID raised the odds of having a car crash about as much as being at the legal threshold of DUI or running a red light, according to an analysis of pandemic-era public health and transportation records from seven states (*Axios*).

COVID-19, 04/25/2025

World Total Cases
777,704,325

World Total Deaths
7,093,786

U.S. Total Deaths
1,221,897

World Health Organization

COVID Ravaged SNF Is Being Renovated

The Mary Wade Home, in New Haven Connecticut with an input of \$700,000 from the state, is demolishing and rebuilding its Boardman Residence wing, built in the 1890s.

In the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, prior to the development of vaccines, the Mary Wade Home had 25 deaths before the end of May 2020.

The facility, made it difficult to prevent the spread of the airborne pathogen.

The corridors are three feet wide and cannot accommodate a stretcher and the bathroom is a congregate space shared among 12 to 15 residents.

New Haven Register, 04/21/2025

She Filed Nearly \$100M In False COVID-19 Claims

A Nevada woman – Candies Goode-McCoy – pleaded guilty to making fraudulent claims for refunds of false COVID-19 related employment tax credits.

In total, these claims sought refunds of over \$98 million, of which the IRS paid approximately \$33 million.

From around June 2022 through September 2023, McCoy filed approximately 1,227 false tax returns for her businesses claiming refundable credits for employee retention credit, paid sick and family leave.

McCoy is scheduled to be sentenced in February 2026. She faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

DOJ news release

Committee Calls for Financial Probe of SEIU Official

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce is calling for the Office of Labor-Management Standards to investigate alleged “improper financial practices” by the union 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East.

In a letter committee Chair Tim Walberg (R-Mich.) expressed concern about “numerous troubling allegations” detailed in a POLITICO article which

found union President George Gresham has for years used the organization’s funds to benefit himself, his family and political allies.

The article outlined expenditures on “lavish travel, nepotistic arrangements, unexplained payouts to political allies ... that do not benefit rank-and-file members.”

Politico, 04/18/2025

Union Standoff but Bankruptcy Sale on Again

In a high-stakes courtroom showdown, the bankrupt operator of Cold Spring Hills Center for Nursing & Rehabilitation in Woodbury N.Y., won crucial approval for the sale of its embattled 588-bed facility and halting a pending closure that could have displaced hundreds of elderly residents.

A bankruptcy judge gave the green light for the sale after a fierce dispute with 1199SEIU East was resolved, paving the way for Sywood LLC to take over operations.

The union had claimed Sywood proposed changes to the collective bargaining contract that would have affected benefits and wage increases.

USA Herald, 03/20/2025

Proposed NY Law Would Hinder SNFs’ Collections

Blasting what she calls predatory billing practices, New York’s attorney general is proposing a new state law that would subject some nursing homes to civil enforcement.

The “FAIR” act would update state law to include the nursing home provision. It also addresses artificial intelligence-based schemes, phishing scams, hard-to-cancel subscriptions, junk fees and other “unfair, deceptive and abusive practices.”

It would specifically target nursing homes that “routinely sue relatives of deceased residents for their unpaid bills despite not having any basis for liability.”

The state bill comes just six weeks after CMS limited nursing homes’ ability to collect from third parties.

McKnight’s, 03/19/2025

ONE COLUMN

The Mandate May Be Gone But It’s Not Forgotten

Two weeks after a judge struck down federal staffing standards for all US nursing homes, questions about the rule’s future continue to swirl within the industry.

Will the government appeal the District Court’s ruling in Texas and continue to fight for regulations that would force nursing homes to create more than 100,000 new jobs in coming years?

How will a judge hearing a similar challenge in Iowa interpret similar arguments, and what happens if the rulings conflict with one another?

Could Congress step in with a solution that puts the entire rule to bed much faster than any lawsuit might?

Regardless of whether the rule goes away, industry insiders have one clear expectation: Its legacy will continue to chafe nursing home leaders, who will still face intense pressure to recruit quality staff and improve patient care.

“The literature is crystal clear that quality of life and quality of care are related to staffing, and that doesn’t just mean the number of staff. It means both the adequacy of staff and the training and the skills of the staff,” said Alice Bonner, chair of the Moving Forward Coalition. “We should use this debate that we’ve been having for the last two years. We should use this as a call to action to say,

‘OK now everybody has realized that this is a major, significant issue in this country.’ We have to take action now.”

It’s also unimaginable that consumer groups and the unions that supported the mandate will abandon their pursuit of additional requirements for nursing homes, who they’ve repeatedly painted as failing residents during COVID.

Consumer advocacy groups were relatively quiet after the ruling in Texas, but they still very much support the rule even arguing that the daily minimum 3.48 hours of nursing care the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services promulgated didn’t go far enough.

McKnight’s, 04/21/2025

CMS Auditors May Have Nursing Homes in Crosshairs

A group of legal and compliance experts warn that more frequent use of audits by government contractors and targeted “probe-and-educate” audits conducted by Medicare Administrative Contractors, could line up with the White House’s oft-stated goal of identifying overpayments.

They also could lead to revocations and fees that are easily driven higher by extrapolating sample findings across a nursing home’s entire operation.

The cost-effective nature of auditing and overpayment extrapolation make the contractors an ideologically aligned mechanism for the Trump administration to reduce federal healthcare program expenditures by reducing fraud, waste, and abuse without cutting specific benefits or entitlements.

McKnight's, 04/23/2025

Illinois Considers Joining Cities in Lift Charges

Illinois lawmakers are again proposing a bill that would charge nursing home residents for non-emergency uses of lift assists rendered by a municipality or fire protection district.

Though not in full agreement with the proposal, Illinois provider organizations say they are working with the General Assembly on a suitable compromise.

Cities and municipalities across the state have always had the ability to charge for such services.

Springfield, the Illinois capital, isn’t waiting for the state to pass a bill. Its leaders have introduced an amendment to the city code that would charge long-term care facilities \$350 per lift assist use.

McKnight's, 04/18/2025

Florida Bill Helps Veterans' Admission to Nursing Homes

A final Senate committee OK’d a bill that removes some of the red tape to help veterans and their families get space in skilled nursing facilities.

Under the bill, Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs Director would be

allowed to approve requests “to create or modify veteran- and spouse- designated nursing home beds at a facility so long as any such beds operate in the VA Community Nursing Home Program” and other criteria are met.

The change means a Certificate of Need would no longer be needed first from the Agency for Health Care Administration.

Florida Politics, 04/18/2025

Provides CNA Candidates Access to More Funds

CNAs and other direct care workers would be able to tap a new funding source to cover the costs of education and testing under a U.S. Senate bill.

The Act would allow workers pursuing credentialing to access money saved on their behalf in a state 529 plan.

The Senate bill, would make it legal for 529 funds to be used on tuition, fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for enrollment in a “recognized postsecondary credential program.”

The proposal also allows spending on testing fees required to obtain or maintain the credential and fees for required continuing education.

McKnight's, 04/21/2025

Whistleblower Accused RegalCare of Overbilling

The operator of 19 nursing facilities in Massachusetts and Connecticut, two of its top execs and a therapy consultant allegedly conspired to defraud Medicare and Medicaid of millions of dollars via fraudulent therapy billings.

Named in a legal complaint are the facilities’ current and past management companies, RegalCare Management Group and RegalCare Management 2.0; owner Eliyahu Mirilis, VP of Clinical Reimbursement Hector Caraballo; and Stern Therapy Consultants.

The defendants are accused of inflating therapy services and overbilling from 2017 to 2023. Five complaints were filed at the federal level. Eight others were lodged by Massachusetts officials.

DOJ news release, 02/25/2025

Briefly in the News

As of May 2024, home health and personal care aides made up the largest single occupation in the US with 4 million workers. The next highest groups were retail salespeople and fast food counter workers, which each had 3.8 million (**U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics**).

Community Health Pharmacy in New Haven, Conn has agreed to pay the government 192,000 for improperly keeping records of controlled substances. Authorities alleged that the pharmacy failed to perform a biennial inventory, did not execute a valid power of attorney and allowed an unauthorized individual to sign DEA order forms on “at least eight occasions” (**Hartford Courant**).

The National Institutes of Health has scaled back its awards of new grants by at least \$2.3 billion since the beginning of the year, with the biggest shortfalls hitting the study of infectious diseases, heart and lung ailments, and basic research into fundamental biological systems, a new STAT analysis has found (**Stat**). However, the Trump administration is restoring financial support for a landmark study of women's health reversing a defunding decision that shocked medical researchers (**NPR**).

As the U.S. experiences a large measles outbreak and faces a continuing barrage of vaccine misinformation and cuts to public health programs, the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) at the University of Minnesota is launching a project to help ensure safe US vaccine use. Funded by an unrestricted gift of \$240,000 from Alumbra, a foundation established by philanthropist Christy Walton, the Vaccine Integrity Project will be led by an eight-member steering committee of leading public health and policy experts from across the country (**CIDRAP**).

The Agriculture Department will not require poultry companies to limit salmonella bacteria in their products, halting a Biden Administration effort to prevent food poisoning from contaminated meat (**AP**).