OSHA Seeks Additional Comments on the COVID-19 Healthcare ETS

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued a Federal Register notice to allow for additional public comments and scheduled an informal public hearing related to the development of a final standard to protect healthcare and healthcare support service workers from workplace exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

On June 21, 2021, OSHA issued an emergency temporary standard (ETS) to protect workers in healthcare settings from occupational exposure to COVID-19. The ETS focused on healthcare workers most likely to have contact with people infected with the virus. The ETS took effect immediately, and all but the recordkeeping and reporting requirements, expired on December 27, 2021. The ETS served as a proposed rule for COVID-19 standards. OSHA requested public comments on whether the ETS should become permanent.

OSHA is requesting stakeholder comments on changes to the ETS along with other areas of interest.

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- If you have not yet renewed, your membership expires on March 31!
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“Thank you for providing such great information and being a great source for members to improve our services.”

Keith Sanderson, CareSource Hawaii

The National Association of Home Care & Hospice (NAHC) continued to lead the industry in 2021 through the unprecedented challenges faced by home care and hospice providers during the COVID-19 pandemic, the workforce crisis, and the fight for sensible policies to allow Americans to age in their own homes and communities. Now more than ever, home care and hospice providers must be united, for we are all stronger together. Membership in NAHC ensures your access to the best education and advocacy, as well as up-to-date news and analysis from the most trusted experts in the industry.

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With the release of the 2022 HCP Benchmarking Report, we have detailed data on how the past year has affected home care agencies, and what it can teach us about operating an agency in the future.
Immigration decision could provide a step toward solving caregiver crisis

Efforts to solve the caregiver crisis through immigration reform received a boost earlier this week in a decision favoring immigrants with temporary protected status.

On Monday, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services agreed to restore a path to permanent residency for TPS beneficiaries. Those undocumented immigrants will be able to reopen and dismiss their removal orders and pursue a path to permanent residency and citizenship in the U.S. The USCIS decision stems from a settlement that was awarded to seven TPS beneficiaries who sued the Trump administration for unlawfully denying their protected status to become permanent residents.

Andrea Price-Carter, director of workforce and technology policy for LeadingAge, told McKnight’s Home Care Daily Pulse in an email the decision is welcome news at a time when the long-term care workforce is facing significant staffing shortages.

Halting HCBS Support Is ‘Like Bringing an Umbrella to a Hurricane,’ Advocates Argue in Senate Hearing

On Wednesday, the Senate Special Committee on Aging Chairman, Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.), held a hearing to highlight the importance of home- and
Community-based services (HCBS) for seniors and people with disabilities.

He also attempted to explain the broader impact that investment in the sector can have.

"Underinvestment in caregiving affects all of us — it even hurts our economy," Casey said during the hearing. "Without access to this care, many people, usually women, are forced to leave the workforce to care for a loved one. An investment in home-based care is an investment in families and our nation. It will help people get back to work. It gives families ... peace of mind."

Policy experts to Congress: Simplify Medicaid HCBS waiver system

Policy experts implored Congress Wednesday to streamline and simplify Medicaid’s home-and-community-based-services waiver system, calling it an obstacle to home care in many states.

During a hearing before the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, Lisa Harootunian, associate director for the Bipartisan Policy Center’s Health Program, said states offer HCBS programs through Section 1915 (c) waivers because they allow them to target subpopulations and different regions. She said each state uses an average five different waivers, with some using up to a dozen different waivers. Harootunian told the committee administrative burdens and confusion make it difficult for Medicaid and Medicare dual-eligible seniors to access home care.
To solve the caregiver crisis, we have to overhaul the LTSS system

The need for long-term services and supports (LTSS) is dire. By 2050, 27 million Americans will depend on LTSS, more than doubling the need for these services since 2000. Nationwide, hundreds of thousands of older adults and people with disabilities are on wait lists to access home-based services, which are otherwise often unaffordable.

Compounding this problem, the sector faces a workforce shortage which has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It’s expected that there will be 7.4 million job openings for direct care workers — home health aides, hospice workers, nursing home workers and others — due to growth and turnover by 2029. In no small part, this shift is due to the job’s precarity: unpredictable hours and low compensation, made all the more stressful by pandemic conditions.

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Talent retention is the key to worker crisis, expert panel says

The senior care industry can’t hire its way out of the current worker crisis, a panel of industry experts said Tuesday during a McKnight’s panel discussion.

“There is not enough staff to go around,” Eric Scharber, managing partner at healthcare consulting firm SimiTree said during “Workforce Hurdles and Solutions Across the Long-term Care Continuum,” which was part of a McKnight’s Online Forum. “There will be winners and losers. The difference between the winners and losers are the organizations that can build a really great culture.”
The panel of experts from staffing, home care and senior care companies said the labor shortage was a problem long before the COVID-19 pandemic but has gotten worse over the last two years due to worker burnout from the virus. The loss of frontline staff has increased pressures on leadership positions, panelists explained. With the competition for talent so intense across multiple industries, the panel said long-term care providers need to focus first on retaining employees.

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Lawmakers push to address home care backlog

Some U.S. senators are pushing for more funding for home care services. They say there’s a shortage of in-home care for the people who need it, like seniors and adults with disabilities.

“The demand for care is skyrocketing, but there’s low pay and lack of benefits. They force home care workers to leave the industry,” said Lynn Weidner, a home care worker in Pennsylvania.

Advocates say family members often have to leave the workforce to care for loved ones, because there isn’t help available.

Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pa., introduced legislation that would give states more Medicaid funding to help them shorten home care waiting lists by creating new home care jobs and raising wages for care workers.

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**RESOURCES**
The Human Experience 2020: Vision for the Future of Health Care - The Beryl Institute

Littler Operational Guidelines for the Home Care Industry Amid COVID 19 - Littler Mendelson, P.C.

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