

## Allies for Independence Washington Insights

**Week of February 21, 2023**

### CAPITOL HILL UPDATE

The House and Senate are on recess this week, so this update will be somewhat shorter than usual. The 118<sup>th</sup> Congress has gotten off to an abnormally slow start, due in part to the new House majority and several leadership changes in Senate committees. With March just around the corner, expect regular business to resume and for there to be more hearings, bill introductions, and movement on key policy issues for both parties.

That said, the looming debt limit crisis will continue to be a source of deep concern for both parties and there is no clear path to resolving the standoff. Budget experts predict the debt limit could become an unavoidable problem as early as June, although some experts predict it will be an issue for the end of the summer. Either way, the debt limit is shaping up to dominate the headlines and the direction of key policy for the next several months.

In the near term, the President's Budget is due out March 9, which will formally begin the FY24 appropriations process in both chambers. Both chambers are expected to hold hearings on the Administration's budget request this spring, which will set up key Administration officials to testify on Capitol Hill. We will be following these hearings closely as well as how the Administration prioritizes key funding priorities with a divided legislature this Congress.

Please [reach out](#) if you have any questions or need additional information.

### UPDATES: BEYOND CAPITOL HILL

#### **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Releases Proposed Benefit Expansion**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released a new proposed National Coverage Determination (NTD) which would expand coverage for power seat elevation equipment on certain power wheelchairs (specifically Group 3 powerchairs) to Medicare beneficiaries. This proposal is significant in that it marks the first time Medicare will pay for this benefit, which will allow more people to live more comfortably at home or in a location of their choice.

The Group 3 power wheelchairs are designed to meet the needs of people with Medicare with severe disabilities, and can improve health as individuals transfer from their wheelchair to other surfaces. Transfers are often difficult, and can strain muscles of both a caregiver and the individual using the power wheelchair.

CMS is now requesting feedback from individuals and/or organizations who may represent individuals who use Group 3 power wheelchairs.

- The proposed National Coverage Determination decision memorandum is available to review [here](#).
- The 30-day comment period will close **March 17, 2023**.

### **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Releases New Data on Medicaid, CHIP, and the Public Health Emergency**

This week, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released a new “snapshot”, which provides information on COVID-19 related service utilization by beneficiaries including data on COVID-19 testing, treatment, and acute care use, service use among beneficiaries 18 years of age and younger, services delivered via telehealth, services for mental health and substance use disorders, and reproductive health services for female beneficiaries.

- [View the newly released CMS “snapshot.”](#)

### **Center on I/DD and Mental Health Condition Seeks Individuals to Serve on Steering Committee**

Last September, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) announced the creation of new technical assistance (TA) documents, peer-to-peer learning and resource center to improve support for people with co-occurring intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and mental health needs so they can live and participate in their communities. This week, the center released new information requesting interested parties to join their new steering committee which will make important recommendations on how the center should move forward. The committee will be comprised of 12 individuals who will meet 4 times per year.

- If you have any interest, please email [snonnemacher@nasddds.org](mailto:snonnemacher@nasddds.org) or call 570-460-3964 by March 17, 2023.
- [You may also complete and submit the “interest” form.](#)

## **ISSUE OF THE WEEK: Spotlight on Veterans Issues**

### **Office of Veterans Affairs to Extend Eligibility and Benefits for Legacy Program**

We’re pleased to let you know that the Office of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it will extend eligibility and applicable benefits related to the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) through September 30, 2025. During this time, the VA will not discharge or

decrease any support to Legacy Participants, Legacy Applicants and their Family Caregivers, based on reassessment, to include monthly stipends paid to Primary Family Caregivers. This extends the transition period and timeline to complete reassessments for Legacy Participants, Legacy Applicants and their Family Caregivers for an additional three years.

The following a checklist which will inform you if you and/or family members may be eligible for the program:

**You may be eligible if you and the Veteran you're caring for meet all of these requirements.**

Eligibility requirements for the family caregiver:

- You must be at least 18 years old. And at least 1 of these must be true for you:
- You're a spouse, son, daughter, parent, stepfamily member, or extended family member of the Veteran, or
- You live full time with the Veteran, or you're willing to live full time with the Veteran if we designate you as a family caregiver

**Eligibility requirements for the Veteran**

All of these must be true for the Veteran you're caring for:

- The Veteran has a VA disability rating (individual or combined) of 70% or higher, and
- The Veteran was discharged from the U.S. military or has a date of medical discharge, and
- The Veteran needs at least 6 months of continuous, in-person personal care services

- [Learn more about the VA Caregiver Support Program.](#)

## **ON THE HORIZION**

### **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Housing and Services Resource Center to Hold Webinar on Collaborations Designed to Improve Housing Stability**

Next week, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Housing and Services Resource Center (HSRC) will hold a webinar on "The Role of Transportation in Cross-Sector Collaborations Designed to Improve Housing Stability." As you know, transportation and housing are key when it comes to helping individuals stay at home and in their communities as they age or need extra assistance.

This new webinar will highlight both cross-sector collaborations to improve housing stability and technical assistance resources for partnership development. Presenters will answer participants' questions about forming effective partnerships.

- [Register for the webinar on February 27 at 1pm ET.](#)

### **6th Annual Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day Symposium Coming Up!**

On May 11, 2023, the Biden Administration and the National Council on Aging (NCOA) will hold the 6th annual Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day Symposium. Public health practitioners, professionals

in the aging network, mental health providers, health care professionals, and anyone interested in ensuring the mental health of older adults should save the date and plan on attending this virtual event.

Be on the lookout for additional registration information in the coming weeks and learn more from NCOA!

## **RECOMMENDED READS**

- [“Only 11 States ready to go live with Medicaid HCBS final rule as deadline approaches,” from McKnight’s Senior Living.](#)
- [“What I’ve learned being reliant on a caregiver,” from CNN.](#)
- [Colorado legislature introduces two bills that enhance requirements for staffing and referral agencies used by senior living providers.](#)

## **A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



Thank you for your continued support of Allies for Independence. We hope you enjoy reading our “Washington Insights” Newsletter. Allies for Independence continues its work in bringing disability, aging, chronic illness, and other stakeholder groups together to work on creating a new non-Medicaid Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) financing model. Our weekly newsletter focuses on news you can use, as well as all topics related to LTSS.

We welcome all [feedback](#) from our readers.

Sincerely, Connie Garner  
Executive Director

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