



Washington Weekly!

September 2, 2022

Have a Safe and Happy Labor Day Weekend!

Administration

Biden Announces Nominee for RSA Commissioner

Today, President Biden announced Danté Allen as his nomination for the Commissioner of the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). He currently serves as the executive director for CalABLE, California's qualified Federal ABLÉ Act savings and investment program for people with disabilities. Mr. Allen has also served as a communications leader in the public and private sector, including positions for the California Department of Public Health's newly formed Office of Health Equity and Kaiser Permanente, where he served as the Communications Director for the organization's senior operations executive.

Born with Spina bifida, and a fulltime wheelchair user, Mr. Allen is a staunch proponent of disability rights and equity. He has been a champion for the reduction of health/healthcare and financial disparities, especially among people of color and people with disabilities. He serves as a board member for Resources for Independent Living, Sacramento, a nonprofit that supports the needs of people with disabilities to live as independently as possible. He has also contributed in leadership roles in employee resource groups for people with disabilities throughout his career. Mr. Allen received his undergraduate degree from the University of California at Davis and a master's degree at The University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Journalism and Communication.

DOL Releases August Jobs Report

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) [Jobs Report](#) released today indicates that the employment-to-population ratio for people with disabilities (ages 16-64) increased slightly from 34.4 percent in July to 34.6 percent in August (up 0.6 percent or 0.2 percentage points). For people without disabilities (ages 16-64), the employment-to-population ratio decreased slightly from 75.0 percent in July to 74.6 percent in August (down 0.5 percent or 0.4 percentage points). The employment-to-population ratio, a key indicator, reflects the percentage of people who are working relative to the total population (the number of people working divided by the number of people in the total population multiplied by 100).

"The employment-to-population ratio for people with disabilities has remained steadily above historic highs for the past twelve months," said John O'Neill, PhD, director of the Center for Employment and Disability Research at Kessler Foundation. "This is encouraging for now," he added, "considering the growing concerns about recession."

HHS Awards Youth Mental Health Grants

Today, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), announced that it awarded

\$40.22 million in youth mental health **grants** throughout the month of August. This includes \$5.3 million from American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding intended to address pandemic-related stressors that have increased mental health conditions among younger Americans. HHS also announced \$47.6 million in new grant funding opportunities developed from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

The \$40.22 million in grant funds awarded by HHS in August includes:

1. \$13.9 million total (\$5.3 million from ARP funding) for **Project Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education (AWARE)**, to develop a sustainable infrastructure for school-based mental health programs and services that promote the healthy social and emotional development of school-aged youth and prevent youth violence in school settings.
2. \$1.5 million for **Statewide Family Networks**, to enhance the capacity of statewide mental health family-controlled organizations to engage with family members/primary caregivers who are raising children, youth, and young adults with serious emotional disturbance (SED)
3. \$7.3 million for **Community Programs for Outreach and Intervention with Youth and Young Adults at Clinical High Risk for Psychosis**, to identify, prevent, intervene, and/or lessen the impact of psychotic disorders in youth and adults 25 and younger who are at clinical high risk for psychosis, and to provide evidence-based interventions in a trauma-informed manner to prevent the onset of psychosis.
4. \$3.6 million for **Mental Health Awareness Training grants (MHAT)**, to prepare and train individuals including school personnel, emergency first responders, law enforcement, veterans, armed services members and their families to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental disorders, particularly serious mental illness (SMI) and/or serious emotional disturbances (SED); establish linkages with school- and/or community-based mental health agencies to refer individuals with the signs or symptoms of mental illness to appropriate services; train emergency services personnel, law enforcement, fire department personnel, veterans, and others to identify persons with a mental disorder and employ crisis de-escalation techniques; and educate individuals about resources that are available in the community for individuals with a mental disorder.
5. \$11.3 million for **Expansion and Sustainability of the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances** (Systems of Care), to improve mental health outcomes for children and youth, birth through age 21, with SED and their families. This program supports the implementation, expansion, and integration of the System of Care (SOC) approach by creating sustainable infrastructure and services that are required as part of the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and their Families Program (also known as the Children's Mental Health Initiative or CMHI).

SAMHSA Awards Grants for Overdose Prevention

On International Overdose Awareness Day, August 31, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announced \$79.1 million in overdose prevention **grants**, are being awarded. The \$79.1 million in grant funding comprises:

- \$14.5 million for **First Responders-Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Support Services Act**, which provides resources to first responders and others to train, carry and administer federally approved drugs and devices for emergency reversals of known or suspected opioid overdoses.
- \$7.1 million for **Rural Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Training Grants**, which help rural areas recruit and train EMS personnel with a focus on addressing mental and substance use disorders.
- \$8.2 million for **Targeted Capacity Expansion: Special Projects**, to implement targeted strategies for the provision of substance use disorder (SUD) or co-occurring disorder (COD) harm reduction, treatment, and/or recovery support services to support an under-resourced population or unmet need identified by the community.

- \$1.5 million for **Provider's Clinical Support System – Universities** to provide resources to train graduate-level students in medical, physician assistant, nurse practitioner and other eligible nursing programs in treating opioid use disorders (OUD) and in prescribing medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) in office-based settings.
- \$12.1 million for **Services Grant Program for Residential Treatment for Pregnant and Postpartum Women**, which provides pregnant and postpartum women and their children with comprehensive substance-use treatment and recovery support services across residential and outpatient settings. This year's awards mark the expansion of program services to fathers, partners and other family members.
- \$3 million for the **Strategic Prevention Framework for Prescription Drugs** (SPF Rx) grant program, which provides funds for state agencies, territories and tribal entities to target prescription drug misuse. The program raises awareness about the dangers of sharing medications, about fake or counterfeit pills sold online, and about over-prescribing.
- \$32.7 million for **Medication-Assisted Treatment – Prescription Drug and Opioid Addiction**, which provides resources to help expand and enhance access to MOUD and to decrease illicit opioid use and prescription opioid misuse.

DOL Awards Funding for NDI to Operate Policy Development Center

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has announced the award of \$8 million to support a four-year cooperative agreement with the National Disability Institute (NDI) to operate a policy development center focused on employment for people with disabilities. Administered by the department's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), the cooperative agreement awards about \$2 million each year, with a total availability of approximately \$8 million during its 48-month term. Funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the center will complement the work of ODEP's National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities.

The institute and Social Policy Research Associates – a provider of evaluation, organizational development and facilitation services – will establish and manage the policy development center. It will seek to promote greater and more equitable access to WIOA programs and services, competitive integrated employment opportunities and economic advancement resulting in improved outcomes for individuals with disabilities. [Learn more about ODEP.](#)

HUD Releases Allocations for New Stability Vouchers

This week, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) **issued a notice** about the allocation strategy and program requirements for new "stability vouchers." The \$43 million will support **roughly 4,000 new vouchers**, will incentivize public housing agencies (**PHAs**) to collaborate with **Continuums of Care** and **victim service providers**, and will encourage communities to use a coordinated, **Housing First approach**.

The stability vouchers are part of a **first-of-its-kind package of resources** for unsheltered and rural homelessness. Like the emergency housing vouchers funded by the American Rescue Plan, the stability vouchers offer more flexibility in housing options. To be eligible, a PHA *must* currently administer a Housing Choice Voucher program. To receive stability vouchers, email [**StabilityVouchers@hud.gov**](mailto:StabilityVouchers@hud.gov) no later than October 20 to express interest in the non-competitive program. [Read the full announcement.](#)

Reports and Resources

CMS Releases Report on Medicaid Beneficiaries Who Use LTSS

On Monday, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a report on "Medicaid Beneficiaries Who Use Long-Term Services and Supports." This brief explores use of long-term services and supports (LTSS) across different home and community-based services (HCBS) and institutional categories during calendar year 2019. This report provides data to

support States and stakeholders in making data-based decisions, responding to rebalancing trends, and planning for growth in HCBS.

The brief describes how the use of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) section 9817 service categories can help States to better understand their populations' access to HCBS. CMS found that 8.8 million Medicaid beneficiaries across 51 States received LTSS through FFS or MC delivery systems in 2019. Of these, 1.7 million beneficiaries (19.0 percent) received institutional services, 7.4 million (84.3 percent) received HCBS, and 0.3 million (3.3 percent) received both. Learn more [here](#).

ARCH Reports on State Lifespan Respite Grant Activities

The ARCH National Respite Network has published its [report](#), "State Summaries of Lifespan Respite Grant Activities and Outcomes Final Reports, FY2017–FY2020." The report highlights outcomes, accomplishments, successful partnerships and lessons learned. ARCH also recently prepared [State summaries](#) of FY 2020 and FY 2021 funded Lifespan Respite proposals.

The ARCH newsletter this week featured activities in two States:

- 1) In August, the Arkansas Lifespan Respite grantee released the [2022 Arkansas Caregiver Feedback Preliminary Data Report](#). The purpose of this study was to provide Arkansas caregivers a platform to provide input and feedback into a caregiver's environment and their overall understanding of respite supports available to them, while collecting preliminary demographic and quantitative data to determine future activities and services to reduce caregiver stress and promote caregiver overall health.

The top five (5) identified care recipient primary diagnoses (n=371) reported included the following: Developmental/Intellectual Developmental Disability (DD/IDD) (20%, n=76), Alzheimer's or other dementias (14%, n=52), Cancer (10%, n=37), Mental/Emotional Illness or Depression (9%, n=35), and Brain Damage/Injury and other Neurological (6%, n=23). Other neurological diagnosis includes Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS), seizure disorders, multiple sclerosis, and spinal muscular atrophy.

- 2) The University of Wisconsin published the [research brief](#), *Families Under Stress: Assessing Caregivers' Adaptation, Coping and Resilience through the Covid-19 Pandemic* examines family caregivers' experiences during the pandemic in Wisconsin from May 2020 to June 2021. The findings of this brief can help to provide a better understanding of the challenges of caregiving and how to support caregivers during stressful events. A brief, plain language [summary](#) is also available. The [Respite Care Association of Wisconsin](#) was listed as a resource to help caregivers in need of respite care. A [companion brief](#) on the experiences of parents of children with and without special healthcare needs is also available.

TBIMS Investigator Interviewed by Kaiser Health News

Joseph T. Giacino, PhD, principal investigator for the NIDILRR-funded [Spaulding-Harvard Traumatic Brain Injury Model System Center](#), was interviewed for an article, [Cognitive Rehab May Help Older Adults Clear Covid-Related Brain Fog](#), in Kaiser Health News. Cognitive rehabilitation is therapy for people whose brains have been injured by concussions, traumatic accidents, strokes, or neurodegenerative conditions such as Parkinson's disease. Dr. Giacino discussed how the repetitive tasks of restorative cognitive rehabilitation help the brain rebuild connections after it is injured, similar to building muscle.

Academy Publishes Resource on Respite Care and Adult Day Services in MLTSS

Last Friday, the National Academy for State Health Policy unveiled a [new map](#) that explores how States cover respite care and adult day services through Medicaid Managed Long-Term Services and Supports (MLTSS) — including who is eligible for these services and how States cap respite services. Nearly half of States use MLTSS to provide services for older adults and adults with physical disabilities — and while all these States cover respite and adult day services, some give managed care organizations greater flexibility to provide these services.

In July, the National Academy for State Health Policy produced the report, “Expanded Federal Investment in Home and Community-Based Services: State Approaches to Serve Children and Youth.” According to CMS guidance, States may direct funds from the increased Medicaid FMAP under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to introduce, expand, or strengthen the HCBS benefits, including respite and family caregiver support. This report documents these activities.

Three States (CO, ID, and WV) planned to use their enhanced Medicaid HCBS FMAP under APRA to support respite care for children’s caregivers through a variety of strategies. Seven States (Arizona, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and West Virginia) proposed efforts to provide training and peer support for family caregivers, particularly those with children with complex health care needs. Three States (AZ, MN and IL) proposed using the increased FMAP funds under ARPA to enhance access to HCBS by providing reimbursement specifically for family caregivers of children. [Read more and download the report.](#)

Research and Training Center Looks at BRFSS Data on Caregiver Demographics

The National Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Family Support (NCFS), University of Pittsburgh, produced a brief on “Caregiver Profile: A Closer Look at Spousal Caregivers,” July 2022. Using data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS) National Study of Caregiving (NSOC), the demographics and key indicators of the physical, mental, emotional, and financial health of spousal caregivers are examined. This brief also identifies spousal caregivers in both younger (<65) and older (65+) age cohorts with disability and provides insight into factors such as health status, work, finances, and access to services among these subgroups. [Read the brief.](#)

Upcoming Webinars and Conferences

National Academy to Host Webinar on National Family Caregiving Strategy

On October 3, 2022, from 2:00-3:00pm (ET), the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) will host the webinar, “National Family Caregiving Strategy: A State Roadmap for Supporting Family Caregivers.” NASHP is hosting this webinar to discuss the opportunities within the newly released National Family Caregiving Strategy and how it can provide a roadmap for States that are interested in developing and expanding supports for family caregivers. A federal official, State administrator, and philanthropic expert will give an overview of the first-of-its-kind National Family Caregiving Strategy and will highlight how the State of Delaware is listening to family caregivers to better support their needs. NASHP’s RAISE Act Family Caregiver Resource and Dissemination Center is holding this webinar, with generous support from The John A. Hartford Foundation and RRF Foundation for Aging. [Register here.](#)

CMS Offers Webinar on Implementing EVV for Home Health Services

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is hosting the webinar, “Building on Successes Toward Implementation of Electronic Visit Verification for Home Health Care Services,” on Sept. 14, 2022, from 1:30 – 3:00pm (EST). This training will build on promising practices for implementing Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) for Medicaid personal care services (PCS) to discuss considerations for States as they implement and adapt their EVV solutions to accommodate Medicaid home health care services (HHCS). Experiences shared in EVV Learning Collaboratives, compliance surveys, and targeted interviews with States and stakeholders will inform recommendations in areas of system design and redesign, stakeholder engagement, compliance with the Cures Act, and more. Please register for this webinar [here.](#)

Registration is Open for AUCD In-Person Conference on Health Equity

AUCD announced this week that registration is open for the in-person conference scheduled for November 13-16. This year’s theme is “Health Equity: Serving the Whole Person.” The AUCD 2022 Conference will be held at the Marriott Marquis Washington. You may find more information and register [here.](#)

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