

THE SCALA CONNECTION

The association's informative quarterly newsletter
for the senior living industry.

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The SC Assisted Living Association (SCALA) is a not-for-profit 501 (c) (6) membership organization dedicated to providing advocacy, communication, education, and resources for SC's assisted living industry. Share our vision and join us today!

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Spring Conference
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May 3-4

More info [HERE](#)



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December 1, 2022- Columbia, SC



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DHEC CONFIRMS CASE OF LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE IN RIDGEWAY

Researchers with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control have identified one confirmed case of Legionnaire's Disease at Ridgeway Manor Healthcare Center in Ridgeway.

Ron Aiken, media relations director of DHEC made the following statement:

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) identified one confirmed case of Legionnaire's Disease among the residents. Four more probable cases have been identified and are being investigated after reviewing a line list for all residents who reported lower respiratory illness during the last 12 months, lived at the facility and who had no alternative diagnosis. The well water sample taken at the facility last week tested negative for the presence of Legionella. Our investigation into the source or sources of Legionnaires' at this facility is ongoing, and we can provide additional information once it's complete.

It's important to note that investigations into the source or sources of Legionnaires is complex, and often it's not possible to determine the origin of the bacteria that infected people. The facility staff continue to be helpful in our investigation, and we continue to ensure that facility implements the necessary precautions for protecting the both the residents and staff of Ridgeway Manor Healthcare Center.

Legionnaires' disease travels through water droplets in the air and can lead to a deadly type of pneumonia or lung infection, which can be particularly dangerous in a nursing home. Symptoms of Legionnaire's disease are like COVID and the flu and include fever, chills and a cough. In some cases, it can cause muscle aches, headaches, tiredness and loss of appetite. Symptoms of the disease usually occur two to 10 days after exposure. Doctors say the disease can be treated with antibiotics, but according to the Centers for Disease Control, one out of 10 people who get Legionnaires' disease will die from the infection.

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT TAMPS DOWN ON PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICE INCREASES ABOVE INFLATION

The Biden-Harris Administration has made lowering prescription drug costs in America a key priority. This month, the Department of Health and Human Services, through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), announced 27 prescription drugs for which Part B beneficiary coinsurances may be lower from April 1 – June 30, 2023. Thanks to President Biden's new law to lower prescription drug costs, some people with Medicare who take these drugs may save between \$2 and \$390 per average dose starting April 1, depending on their individual coverage. Through the Inflation Reduction Act, President Biden and his Administration are lowering prescription drug costs for American seniors and families.

The Medicare Prescription Drug Inflation Rebate Program is one of the many important tools Medicare has to address rising drug costs. By reducing coinsurance for some people with Part B coverage and discouraging drug companies from increasing prices faster than inflation, this policy may lower out-of-pocket costs for some people with Medicare and reduce Medicare program spending for costly drugs.

CMS has released information about these 27 Part B drugs and biological products in the quarterly ASP public file, available [here](#). A fact sheet is available [here](#). Lower Part B coinsurance will go into effect on April 1, 2023. This coinsurance adjustment applies to certain drugs and biologicals covered under Medicare Part B. The Part B drugs impacted by this coinsurance adjustment may change quarterly.

See the initial guidance detailing the requirements and procedures for the Medicare Prescription Drug Inflation Rebate Program [here](#). In addition, HHS [released](#) a report on how much Medicare Part D enrollees would have saved on vaccine cost-sharing if the Inflation Reduction Act has been in effect in 2021.

VALERIE
HOWE

I don't know about you but I am ready for spring! With each spring comes a chance for renewal. Spring allows us to get out embrace all that this beautiful world has for us and well; we do live in the most delightful state in the country! Whether you are a lover of the beach or the mountains are calling you – take a minute for yourself and enjoy this magnificent place we call home.

If you have not signed up already, I should remind you that the Spring Conference & Trade Expo is set for May 3-4 at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center. This is just one of many ways to earn CEU's through the association. In addition to this event, we offer educational seminars throughout the year both in person and via webinar. Did you know that SCALA has been offering these programs for over 25 years!

SCALA also has your back at the legislative table. If you have concerns regarding laws, rules, and regulations about Assisted Living in South Carolina please share them with us. The more we know the better we are prepared to address the concerns of the Administrators who work in the community day in and day out. We, like you, want to push for positive change in the industry! We are fortunate to have the opportunity to do what we do. Not everyone can lay their head on their pillow at night and know that they did something good for someone. Our impact and dedication make a difference in the lives of those we serve!

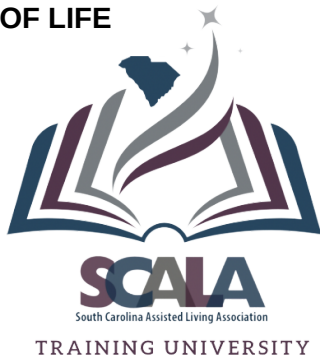
May you each have a marvelous and blessed spring!

Conferences, Trainings & Education

Join SCALA for educational & networking opportunities to keep current with industry trends & to share best practices with colleagues. SCALA provides quality education & training for health care professionals in the industry. Participate in educational sessions at the spring & fall SCALA conferences, then put the information you learn into practice. Take advantage of regional training seminars & industry forums throughout the year. SCALA members enjoy discounted rates on all SCALA events.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION =
QUALITY OF LIFE**

2023 schedule is
AVAILABLE NOW.



SCALA IMPORTANT DATES:

April 20- SCALA Board of Directors Meeting

May 3-4- Spring Conference & Trade Expo

June 28- Last Chance Program for ceu's

July 13- SCALA Board of Directors Meeting

Sept. 25-27- Annual Fall Convention

December 5- Winter Holiday Meeting

DEADLY FUNGAL INFECTION RAPIDLY SPREADING IN U.S. HEALTH FACILITIES

A drug-resistant and potentially deadly fungus has been spreading rapidly through U.S. health care facilities, a new government study finds. The fungus, a type of yeast called *Candida auris*, or *C. auris*, can cause severe illness in people with weakened immune systems. The number of people diagnosed with infections — as well as the number of those who were found through screening to be carrying *C. auris* — has been rising at an alarming rate since it was first reported in the U.S., researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported this week.

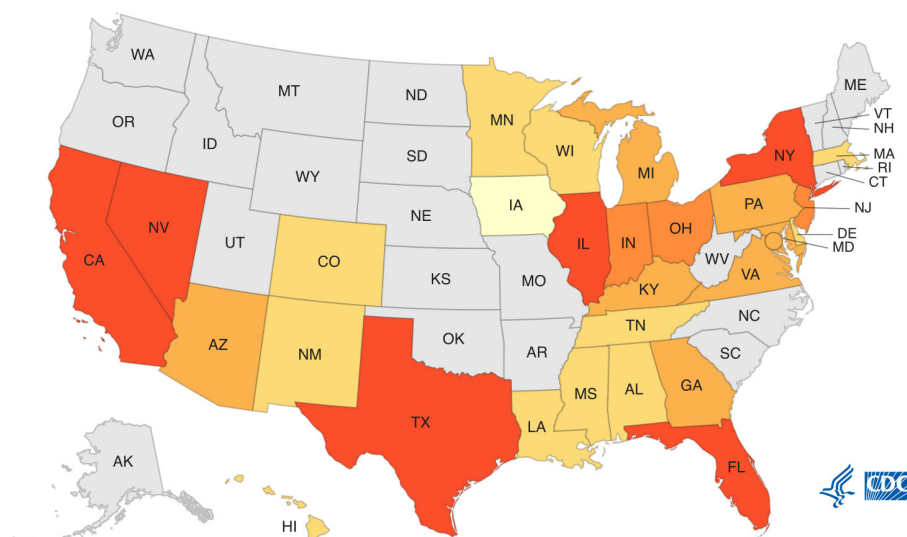
The **CDC's new warning**, comes as Mississippi is fighting a growing outbreak of the fungus. Since November, at least 12 people have been infected with *C. auris* with four "potentially associated deaths," according to the state's health department, Tammy Yates, spokesperson for Mississippi State Department of Health. There has been ongoing transmission at two long-term care facilities, although cases have been identified at several other facilities in the state. "Unfortunately, multi-drug resistant organisms such as *C. auris* have become more prevalent among our highest risk individuals, such as residents in long-term care facilities," said Yates.

The fungus can be found on the skin and throughout the body, according to the CDC. It's not a threat to healthy people, but about one-third of people who become sick with *C. auris* die. In the CDC report, researchers analyzed state and local health department data on people sickened by the fungus from 2016 through Dec. 31, 2021, as well as those who were "colonized," meaning they were not ill but were carrying it on their bodies with the potential of transmitting it to others who might be more vulnerable to it. The number of infections increased by 59%, to 756, from 2019 to 2020 and then by an additional 95%, to 1,471, in 2021.

C. auris has now been detected in more than half of U.S. states, the new study found. Most concerning was the increasing numbers of fungus samples resistant to the common treatments for it. Even if *C. auris* moves beyond health care facilities and into communities, it's unlikely to become a problem for healthy people who do not have invasive medical devices, such as catheters, inserted into their blood vessels.

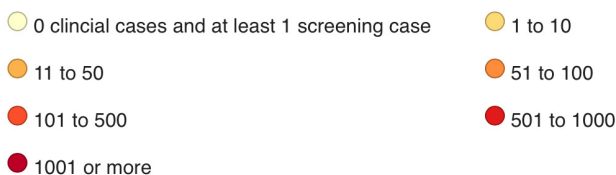
Unfortunately *C. auris* can colonize not only people who come in contact with the fungus, but also patient rooms. The fungus has an extreme ability to survive on surfaces and it can colonize walls, cables, bedding, chairs. Cleaning requires bleach and uv light. It's important to stop the pathogen so it doesn't spread beyond hospitals and long-term facilities like the drug-resistant bacteria MRSA did.

The CDC continues to work with state, local, and territorial health departments and other partners to address this emerging threat to public health.



Number of *C. auris* clinical cases through December 31, 2022

In the most recent 12 months, there were 2,377 clinical cases and 5,754 screening cases (January 2022 - December 2022).





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REPORT: DHEC CRCF MEETING WITH ASSOCIATIONS

SCALA attended a meeting with DHEC the end of last month and the following notes were made from the meeting:

- DHEC states they have had a lot of enforcements recently primarily on Care and staffing issues. 10 enforcements are pending now. Mostly these are affecting smaller homes considered 30 beds or less.
- Compliance survey is completed annually or 2 times a year. DHEC will begin sending to associations and ED's and facilities twice a year (June, December) a list of top 10 citations they are seeing so we can share with communities to help improve and prepare for surveys.
- Facilities may send a request on letterhead to request your last 2 surveys to Everette Williams. This may be particularly helpful to new administrators at a facility in seeing what the specific issues have been or identify any repeat issues they are seeing so they can be addressed.
- Since 2022 -18 CRCF' s have closed, mostly smaller facilities but maybe around 2 were over 30 beds.
- DHEC plans to reinstate the CRCF Committee as it has not been active since 2020. These meetings will usually occur quarterly and the goal from DHEC is to have the first one in June or July.
Suggestions for the next meeting include: survey questions & discussions to identify issues with surveyors or inconsistencies with citations. DHEC wants us to stress to facilities that they want to be seen as a resource. They do not want people to fear asking them questions or requesting assistance as they are happy to answer questions or if needed, train. Sandra Johnson johnsosg@dhec.sc.gov and Pam Williams williapk@dhec.sc.gov are also great contacts for people to reach out to with questions or training requests in addition to JoMonica TAYLORJJ@dhec.sc.gov or Angie smithag@dhec.sc.gov.
- Many issues they are also seeing facilities are experiencing are related to documentation and financial. Facilities need to be reminded to give more details on notes of observation. Do not make it too simple.
- Regarding the notices for review of regulations every 5 years- SCALA did submit comments in December 2021 however DHEC did confirm that just because they publish a request for comment and open the regs up for review does not mean they necessarily will do changes. Angie mentioned DHEC will keep the comments they received from Associations for the next time they are open.
Sarah Doctor Greenwade suggested that our different associations meet to compare our regulation suggestions the next time so that we can see what we have that are the same recommendations for changes as well as discuss suggestions that may harm small facilities or affect large facilities.
- Also per the BLTHCA changes going into effect include that now you don't have to be an approved preceptor but any administrator can be a preceptor now. This will help those individuals that cannot easily find preceptors. DHEC wants to remind facilities to update their email addresses with them when they change so you do not miss important communications and notices from DHEC.
- If you have suggestions for forms that DHEC needs to create including fire & life safety forms that you think would be useful, please let Melody or DHEC know. Any of the emails for JoMonica, Pam, Sandra or Angie can be utilized.
- If you have a question on a regulation citation, Angie stated you have the right to absolutely question a surveyor. Please remember to do it in a respectful way, but yes ask questions if you need clarification or reasoning.
- Update policies & procedures – each section of regs needs to be addressed and a signature is required documenting for review and when changes are made. One signature page stating that the P&P have been reviewed. Signed off on yearly.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL (DHEC) IS SEEKING NEW MEMBERS TO JOIN RESIDENTIAL CARE COMMITTEE.

The Residential Care Committee serves as an advisory role to DHEC, providing input on both the licensing and inspection of community residential care facilities across South Carolina. DHEC will be accepting resumes for three open spots for operators of small homes (10 beds or less) and four open spots for large home (11 beds or more).

Individuals can send their resumes to apply for an open position and/or send recommendations for new members directly to **JoMonica Taylor**, director Residential Facilities Division at taylorjj@dhec.sc.gov.

All recommendations and resume submissions must be emailed to DHEC no later than **Friday, March 31, 2023**, at 5:00 p.m. Please feel free to contact JoMonica Taylor at taylorjj@dhec.sc.gov if you have any questions about the Committee and its membership process.

NCAL SUPPORTS BILL EXPANDING VETERANS' OPTIONS FOR LTC ACT

Bipartisan legislation has been introduced in Congress to expand veterans' access to assisted living services. The Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act (S. 495) would create a pilot program for eligible veterans to receive assisted living care paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/495?s=1&r=17>

The fastest growing segment of the veteran population are those over the age of 85, validating the importance of this program. This approach would demonstrate the benefits of assisted living to not only the resident veteran, but to their families and friends. Assisted living offers the best of personal and supportive care services with a team of professionals in a home environment where individuals can continue to live a meaningful life that promotes social engagement, nutrition, and wellbeing.

The bill would create a multi-year pilot to cover assisted living services for the purpose of demonstrate the benefits of assisted living services for qualifying veterans and their families. SCALA members may want to individually reach out and provide feedback in support of this federal legislation through the link above. We will continue to monitor this bill.

Fall Convention & Trade Show

**Marina Inn at
Grande Dunes**
Myrtle Beach, SC



18 ceu's will be available.



SEPT 25-27, 2023



Available late March

70 PERCENT OF ASSISTED LIVING PROVIDERS STILL REPORT SIGNIFICANT OR SEVERE WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

Seventy percent of assisted living providers responding to a newly released LeadingAge workforce poll said they still are experiencing a significant or severe workforce shortage.

The snap poll, completed Feb. 21 to March 13, elicited responses from 891 senior living and care providers. Participants represented assisted living, independent living, memory care, continuing care retirement/life plan communities, affordable senior housing, nursing homes, home health, hospice and Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly. Overall, 64% of all respondents said their workforce situations have not improved in the past year.

According to the overall poll results, it is not uncommon for 20% of positions within an organization to be open with no applicants. Participants said they are dipping deep into their reserves to cover staffing agency costs and that remaining staff members are carrying heavier workloads to make up for shortages. The most difficult positions to fill are registered nurses (86%), licensed practical nurses (85%) and certified nursing assistants (85%). Respondents said that staff members are leaving for better pay (78%), better work schedules (53%) and burnout (73%). Those results mirror those from the last LeadingAge poll in June 2022.

Recruitment and retention tactics were implemented by 70% of participants, who said they offered increased hourly wages (92%), sign-on bonuses (69%), creative scheduling (61%) and career advancement opportunities (56%).

In trying to build a pipeline of potential workers, respondents reported minimal success — but strong interest — in tapping into immigrant and refugee talent pools. Twelve percent said they successfully had recruited foreign workers from the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Canada or other countries through work-based visas, and 5% said they had hired workers on refugee status. Interest in foreign recruitment was high among participants, who said that better policy solutions are necessary to ease the path to immigration.

A recent analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data by the National Investment Center for Senior Living & Care found that assisted living employment has returned to pre-pandemic levels. Assisted living has seen a faster recovery in employment than skilled nursing, where employment remains 14% shy of its pre-COVID level. Ninety-two percent of nursing home providers responding to the LeadingAge poll reported a significant or severe workforce shortage.

McKnights 3/16/23

All About Seniors published the newest edition of the Healthcare Notebook Guide and is Now Available

You can request copies of the Healthcare Notebook Guide for your residents and their families, which is a great way to ensure that everyone is properly informed about the healthcare system and their rights and responsibilities when it comes to managing their health. It's a guide that helps you create a place to keep track of important medical documents and information. Having this information readily available can help to empower both the residents and their families to make the most of their healthcare experience. You can email us at info@stripedrock.org to request copies.





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PFIZER, GSK READY TO LAUNCH RSV VACCINES FOR U.S. SENIORS: REPORT

Drug makers Pfizer and GSK are planning 2023 launches of their respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccines for older adults across the United States, Reuters has reported. The shots would be the first commercially available to prevent RSV.

FDA advisers in late February endorsed approval of both drugmakers' vaccines to prevent RSV in seniors aged 60 and older. The Food and Drug Administration is expected to approve the shots by May, and Pfizer is planning a subsequent fall rollout of its vaccine in the U.S. and Europe, according to the news outlet. The company also expects to launch a version of its RSV vaccine for pregnant women.

GSK, meanwhile, told Reuters that its shot would be ready for seniors this year "without supply constraints." Neither company gave the news outlet an indication of how many doses it had available.

Despite its toll — RSV is estimated to contribute to the deaths of 14,000 people annually in the United States — RSV is not as familiar to the public as other dangerous viral illnesses such as flu and COVID-19. There is likely more awareness of RSV now, however, following the 2022-2023 spike in pediatric RSV hospitalizations, a Pfizer spokesperson told Reuters.

RSV can cause severe respiratory illness in older adults and children. It is estimated to infect up to 10% of nursing homeresidents per year, and leads to death in 2% to 5% of those cases, studies have found.



SOUTH CAROLINA ASSISTED LIVING ASSOCIATION

SILENT AUCTION

Join SCALA at the spring conference for our silent auction supporting speakers, education, networking opportunities & professional development.

MAY 3-4 | SPRING CONFERENCE | COLUMBIA, SC

IN OTHER NEWS

States Looking at Phony Nursing Licenses

Federal and state officials are cracking down on nurses who hold “bogus” licenses, following an investigation into three Florida schools – Palm Beach School of Nursing; Siena College and Sacred Heart International Institute – that allegedly sold diplomas to approximately 7,600 people about 2400 who actually passed state licensing exams.

Many of those individuals took their licensing exam in New York, where people can sit for the test multiple times. Washington state, Delaware and Georgia have rescinded 65 of the licenses. Texas is letting 23 people continue working as nurses while their disciplinary cases are pending.

McKnight's

The pandemic pummeled long-term care – it may not recover quickly, experts warn

Nursing homes and other long term care facilities have lost a record number of residents and staff to COVID-19 – representing about a quarter of all COVID deaths in this country. Now, the industry is suffering through a historic staffing shortage, further exacerbated by omicron. Workers have quit in record numbers since the pandemic started. And during the worst of omicron many frontline staff had to stay home because of breakthrough infections.

[Read more](#)

Caregiver Retreat Cruise- Neat idea for a caregiver cruise retreat. Alaskan Adventure- July 29 – August 5, 2023, Seattle to Seattle

[DHEC Covid -19 Update](#)

[The Three Ps: Offering Benefits that Attract, Engage Staff](#)

[Senior care is crushingly expensive. Boomers aren't ready.](#)

[Increasing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Long Term Care Industry](#)

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Sources
1. 2019–2020 IESNP results.

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What is SCALA?

The South Carolina Assisted Living Association (SCALA) represents the largest number of assisted living communities of any trade association in the state. Representing over 150 SC communities, we are a strong voice on all issues affecting Assisted Living.

We are active legislatively, educating legislators about assisted living, impacting proposed legislation, and employing a lobbyist and consultant to monitor legislation related to our industry. We also work on a regular basis with all state agencies impacting assisted living, sharing our knowledge and understanding of the industry and discussing the issues impacting healthcare.

Education is at the core of our mission, whether it be through advocacy at the Statehouse or in government agency offices or with members, keeping them informed and offering them opportunities to reinforce their skills and knowledge and providing them the opportunity to network with others in the industry. We provide these services through our website, email updates, conferences, seminars and webinars. We also provide interaction for businesses and companies providing goods and services to our industry through our trade shows, on-line membership directory, and industry partner memberships. Finally, our website serves as a resource for consumers of assisted living offering links and resources to guidelines including criteria to consider when finding a facility, a checklist for visiting and selecting an assisted living community and other programs and resources available to them.

WHERE DO MY MEMBERSHIP DUES GO?




- ☒ Office operations
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