



A National Staffing Standard: Improving Care and Working Conditions in Nursing Homes

In February 2022, President Biden announced a major regulatory initiative designed to improve care quality and working conditions for nursing staff in facilities. This initiative could protect millions of nursing home residents and improve the lives of some 600,000 nursing home workers. The announcement included a pledge to set a science-based national minimum staffing standard for nursing facilities that participate in Medicare and Medicaid.

IMPROVING CARE

- Nursing homes long have suffered from substandard care due to poor staffing. Today, more than seven in 10 nursing homes staff below the level experts have determined is necessary to avoid harm to residents.
- Increasing overall nurse staffing has been one of the most consistent recommendations for improving the quality of care in nursing homes. More than 150 studies over decades have documented the strong, positive impact of additional nurse staffing on the care process and outcome measures.
- Higher staffing levels are associated with meaningfully better care: fewer pressure ulcers, infections and hospital visits, and reduced mortality. Nursing homes with higher staffing rates have had fewer COVID-19 cases and deaths than those with lower staffing levels.

Take Action Now!



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FINANCING

- Medicaid and Medicare lose billions of dollars annually to nursing homes using related-party transactions that inflate the cost of care and increase profits. Once the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) completes a separate rulemaking to get a handle on related-party transactions, we will know whether facilities need higher reimbursement rates to improve staffing.
- Many nursing homes can finance additional staffing costs from internally generated resources. Recent litigation in New York revealed significant nursing home profits that could go to staffing, and we think this is true throughout the country.

GENDER AND RACIAL INEQUITY

- Once finalized, a nurse staffing standard may be the most impactful policy initiative to address gender and racial inequality in the health care sector. Nursing homes are a vital employer for Black women. Approximately 90% of nursing home workers are female, 58% are persons of color and 20% are women of color.
- Improvements in the lives of certified nursing assistants (CNAs) will have an intergenerational effect. Nearly one in three CNAs has a child younger than age 18 living at home, and 15% have one or more children younger than age 5.

OVERWHELMING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR MINIMUM STAFFING STANDARDS

- A recent survey by AARP found that 80% of registered voters surveyed, both Republicans and Democrats, were more likely to vote for candidates who supported minimum staffing standards in nursing homes.

NEXT STEPS

- The Biden administration is expected to propose a minimum staffing standard with a 60-day comment period. This rulemaking is a once-in-decades opportunity to improve the quality of care in nursing homes. Please contact your members, leaders and allies to urge them to write to CMS in support of a strong national minimum nursing home staffing standard. We will provide template comments for you if that would be helpful.

