

Newsroom

Press release



CMS Issues Nursing Homes Best Practices Toolkit to Combat COVID-19

May 13, 2020 Nursing facilities

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Today, under the direction of President Trump, CMS released a new [toolkit](#) developed to aid nursing homes, Governors, states, departments of health, and other agencies who provide oversight and assistance to these facilities, with additional resources to aid in the fight against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic within nursing homes. The toolkit builds upon previous actions taken by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which provide a wide range of tools and guidance to states, healthcare providers and others during the public health emergency. The toolkit is comprised of best practices from a variety of front line health care providers, Governors' COVID-19 task forces, associations and other organizations, and experts, and is intended to serve as a catalogue of resources dedicated to addressing the specific challenges facing nursing homes as they combat COVID-19.

“The coronavirus presents a unique challenge for nursing homes. CMS is using every tool at our disposal to protect our nation’s most vulnerable citizens and aid the facilities that care for them. This toolkit will support state, local leaders and nursing homes in identifying best practices to protect our vulnerable elderly in nursing homes” said CMS Administrator Seema Verma.

The toolkit provides detailed resources and direction for quality improvement assistance and can help in the creation and implementation of strategies and interventions intended to manage and prevent the spread of COVID-19 within nursing homes. The toolkit outlines best practices for a variety of subjects ranging from infection

control to workforce and staffing. It also provides contact information for organizations who stand ready to assist with the unique challenges posed by caring for individuals in long-term care settings. Each state was involved in the creation of this toolkit, resulting in a robust resource that may be leveraged by a variety of entities serving this vulnerable population.

Additionally, CMS has contracted with 12 Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organizations (QIN-QIOs) to work with providers, community partners, beneficiaries and caregivers on data-driven quality improvement initiatives designed to improve the quality of care for beneficiaries across the United States. The QIN-QIOs are reaching out to nursing homes across the country to provide virtual technical assistance for homes that have an opportunity for improvement based on an analysis of previous citations for infection control deficiencies using publicly available data found on Nursing Home Compare.

This effort augments CMS Administrator Seema Verma's [five-part plan](#) to ensure safety and quality in America's nursing homes, which was announced in April 2019, and recent agency efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19 within these facilities. Since February, CMS has taken unprecedented action to address COVID-19 within nursing homes. On [February 6](#), CMS took action to prepare the United States for COVID-19 by reissuing longstanding infection control guidelines. CMS then moved quickly to address the rapid spread of infection by issuing guidance on new [screening processes](#) for facilities, on the use of [personal protective equipment](#) (PPE), and on [temporary restrictions](#) on non-essential medical staff and visitors in March. CMS immediately followed these actions by [prioritizing inspections](#) to conduct targeted surveys for infection control and complaints triaged at the Immediate Jeopardy level.

The Agency also issued a [call to action](#) for nursing homes and state and local governments as a means of reinforcing infection control responsibilities and urging leaders to work closely with facilities to determine needs for testing and PPE. Recently, CMS announced [payment increases](#) for certain lab tests that use high-throughput technologies to rapidly diagnose large numbers of COVID-19 cases. Finally, CMS will now require nursing homes to [report cases of COVID-19](#) directly to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and inform residents and their families and representatives of COVID-19 cases within their facilities in an effort to improve transparency.

To keep up with the important and ongoing work of the White House Coronavirus Task Force in response to COVID-19, visit www.coronavirus.gov. For information specific to CMS, please visit the [Current Emergencies Website](#).

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