

LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

Advancing Quality, Dignity & Justice

Does Your Nursing Home Have Enough Care Staff?

New Federal Data Released on Staffing Levels in U.S. Nursing Home

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New York, NY, November 1, 2017—This week marks the official release by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) of new data on staffing levels in U.S. nursing homes. Staffing is key to the quality of care and safety provided by a nursing home. Though the critical need for sufficient staffing is widely acknowledged, too many nursing homes fail to have enough staff to ensure that residents receive decent care and are able to live with dignity. With over half of Americans who reach age 60 expected to need nursing home care at some point, accurate staffing information is important to the public and to state and federal policymakers (who are responsible for overseeing both public safety and the appropriate use of Medicaid and Medicare funds, which pay for the majority of nursing home services).

Following is information on the new data released by CMS.

What's New?: CMS has released, for the first time, information on nursing home staffing that is based on payroll or other auditable data sources. Up until now, public information on nursing home staffing levels has been based on data that are self-reported by facilities. Also, up until now, there has been no mechanism in place to ensure that facilities are accurately reporting this vital information.

Why?: The new reporting system was developed because the self-reported data have long been considered by many to be suspect (i.e., that there is a strong potential for facilities to overstate their staffing levels with impunity). Under the new, payroll-based journal (PBJ) reporting system, facilities are required to report verifiable staffing data that distinguishes between staff who were assigned to resident care and those with administrative duties.

Where?: The new data are available in large files at <https://data.cms.gov/>. To facilitate public access to the information which we have identified as most important to resident safety, LTCCC has published facility data on our website at <http://nursinghome411.org/nursing-home-staffing-2017q2/>.

The data provided on www.nursinghome411.org include: resident census, RN, LPN and CNA care staffing for every facility (as reported on the CMS database). We used those data to compute hours per resident day (HPRD) for both all care staff and for RNs. To facilitate ease of use, we separated the data into individual state files and inserted sorting (arrow) icons at the top of each column so that the state files can be sorted by criteria such as RN HPRD.

How Is This Important To The Public?: Direct care staffing levels, especially those of Registered Nurses (RNs) are one of the most important indicators of a nursing home's quality and safety. Thus, it is essential that the information on staffing levels is accurate and accessible.

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LTCCC is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving care and quality of life for residents in nursing homes and other residential care settings. Visit www.nursinghome411.org for more information about nursing home quality and compliance with minimum safety standards as well as our free resources for LTC consumers.