

Infection Control

Introduction

- Substandard infection prevention and control practices are a longstanding and widespread problem in U.S. nursing homes.
- According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 to 3 million serious infections occur every year in nursing home and assisted living facilities and as many as 388,000 residents die each year due to infections.²¹ [Note: This figure was reported prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.]
- The U.S. Government Accountability Office found that, prior to the pandemic, “most nursing homes were cited for infection prevention and control deficiencies (82% of those surveyed from 2013-2017). About half of these homes had persistent problems and were cited across multiple years.”²²
- The extent of inadequate infection prevention and control practices in U.S. nursing homes was a growing concern in the years prior to the pandemic. In fact, when CMS revised the federal requirements for nursing homes in 2016, one of the few substantive changes it made was to require that nursing homes have an infection preventionist on, at least, a part-time basis.
- Many infections can be prevented and controlled through basic precautions, such as hand hygiene. Even in respect to addressing the spread of COVID-19, both the CDC and CMS focused on providing education to the nursing home industry on basic sanitary protocols, such a “cough etiquette” and the aforementioned hand hygiene.

Communal COVID dining: A “No Harm” Infection Control Deficiency (F880)

In May 2020, a New York nursing home continued communal dining and violating COVID-19 health and safety protocols at the peak of the pandemic. Observations revealed 27 residents seated in the dining room, most unmasked and within six feet of each other. The citation was cited as no harm despite the facility’s failure to provide a safe environment to help prevent the spread of COVID.

²¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/index.html>.

²² *Infection Control Deficiencies Were Widespread and Persistent in Nursing Homes Prior to COVID-19 Pandemic*, GAO-20-576R (May 20, 2020). Available at <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-576r>.

- In August 2020, then CMS administrator Seema Verma “warned nursing home operators that ‘significant deficiencies in infection control practices’ were responsible for increases in COVID-19 deaths.”²³
- This section contains state and regional data on Infection control citations (F880 - Infection Prevention & Control), including key findings, a map data visualization, and tables.

Key Findings

- Infection Control (F880) accounted for 7.8% of all deficiencies identified by surveyors during the three-year period we reviewed. Annually, this was an average of 5.7 citations for every 1,000 residents in U.S. nursing homes.
- Of the 22,554 infection control citations, only 3.2% were categorized as causing harm or putting any residents in immediate jeopardy (G+). This indicates that **state surveyors rarely identify substandard infection control practices as a serious problem or significant threat to residents**. As discussed in the introduction to this report, in the absence of identification of harm or immediate jeopardy, a facility is unlikely to face any penalty. Essentially, from a consumer perspective, this means that facilities are paid for deficient practices.
- Even in 2020, during which COVID-19 decimated nursing homes, state surveyors failed to identify any harm or immediate jeopardy to a single resident 93.5% of the time that they found inadequate infection control practices.
- East coast states (New York, Vermont, Georgia, New Hampshire, North Carolina) reported the lowest IC citation rates²⁴ (see *Figure 8*).
- Region 2’s annual citation rate (2.1 per 1,000 residents) was roughly one quarter that of Region 9’s (8.2). In other words, the federal data indicate that states in Region 9 (California, Nevada, and Arizona) are roughly four times more likely than those in Region 2 (New York, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico) to identify inadequate infection control practices in their state’s nursing homes.

²³ Jaffe, Susan, “Three States Limit Nursing Home Profits in Bid to Improve Care,” *Annals of Long-Term Care* (Oct 25, 2021). Available at <https://www.hmpgloballearningnetwork.com/site/altc/news/three-states-limit-nursing-home-profits-bid-improve-care?hmpid=dXNjZG9jQGdtYWlsLmNvbQ==>.

²⁴ States are listed in ascending order (i.e., NY had the lowest infection control citation rate in the country).

Data: Map and Tables

Infection Control Citation Rate and Severity by State (2018-20)

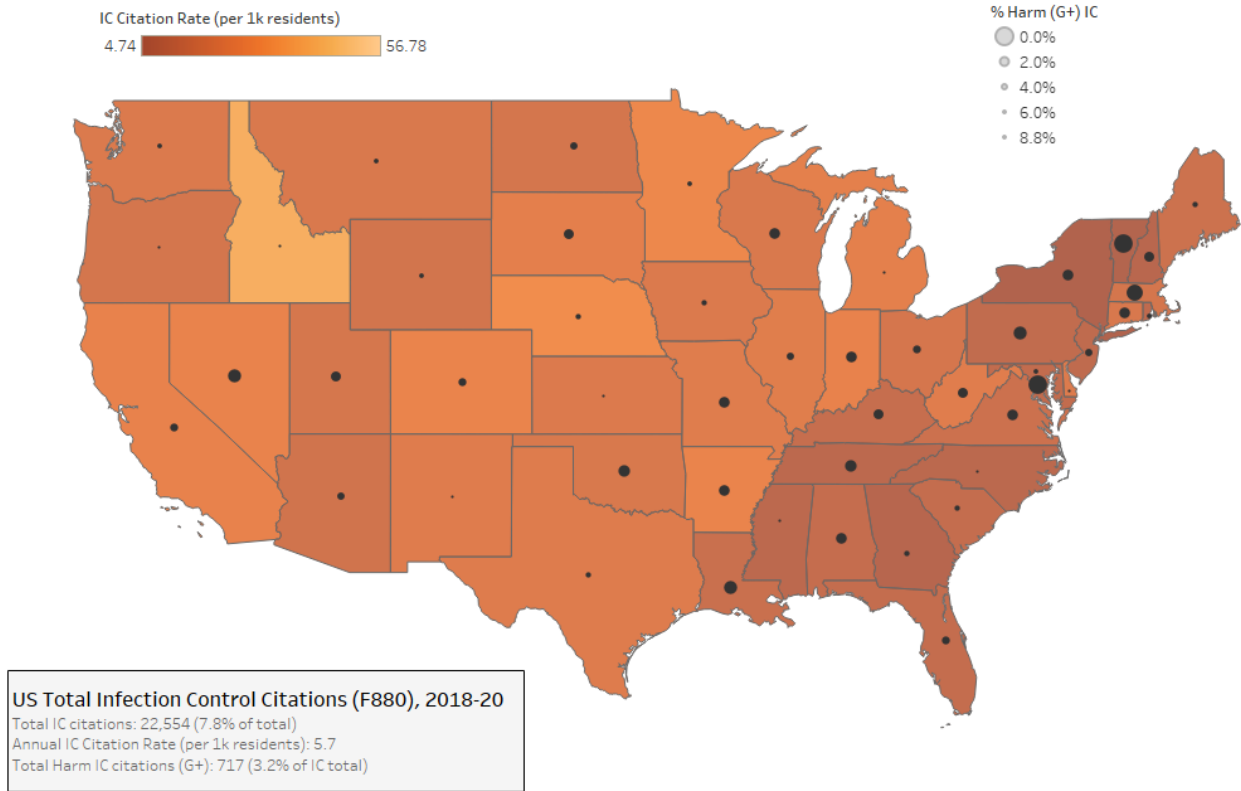


Figure 8: Annual Infection Control citations (F880) per 1k residents during the three-year period from 2018-20. Darker shades indicate lower IC citation rates; larger circles indicate lower proportion of Harm (G+) citations. See *Figure 9* for info on Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.

	Infection Control Citations (F880)	Annual IC Rate (per 1k residents)	Rank: IC Rate	Harm (G+) IC	% Harm (G+) IC	Rank: % Harm IC (G+)
AK	37	18.9	1	0	0.0%	49
AL	274	4.0	39	5	1.8%	36
AR	463	9.0	6	7	1.5%	42
AZ	205	5.6	32	7	3.4%	22
CA	2,635	8.5	10	73	2.8%	28
CO	444	9.0	7	12	2.7%	29
CT	429	6.5	25	8	1.9%	35
DC	31	4.5	37	0	0.0%	49
DE	87	7.1	18	5	5.7%	8
FL	898	4.0	40	26	2.9%	27
GA	228	2.3	50	9	3.9%	21
HI	60	5.4	33	3	5.0%	11
IA	476	7.0	20	20	4.2%	18
ID	172	14.1	2	14	8.1%	2
IL	1,505	7.7	13	48	3.2%	25
IN	1,011	8.7	9	18	1.8%	37
KS	357	7.1	19	23	6.4%	6
KY	288	4.2	38	6	2.1%	31
LA	348	4.6	36	2	0.6%	47
MA	683	6.1	29	1	0.1%	48
MD	264	3.7	42	13	4.9%	14
ME	86	4.9	34	4	4.7%	16
MI	941	8.2	11	70	7.4%	3
MN	690	9.6	5	35	5.1%	10
MO	837	7.5	15	14	1.7%	39
MS	139	3.0	47	8	5.8%	7
MT	80	6.7	22	4	5.0%	11
NC	306	2.8	48	27	8.8%	1
ND	93	5.9	30	3	3.2%	24
NE	343	10.4	4	14	4.1%	20
NH	48	2.5	49	1	2.1%	31
NJ	433	3.4	44	14	3.2%	23
NM	124	7.4	16	8	6.5%	5
NV	158	8.9	8	1	0.6%	46
NY	493	1.6	52	8	1.6%	40
OH	1,342	6.2	27	39	2.9%	26
OK	361	6.7	24	4	1.1%	44
OR	139	6.1	28	9	6.5%	4
PA	793	3.5	43	6	0.8%	45
PR	6	13.8	3	0	0.0%	49
RI	74	3.3	45	4	5.4%	9
SC	195	3.8	41	8	4.1%	19
SD	135	8.0	12	3	2.2%	30
TN	245	3.0	46	3	1.2%	43
TX	2,046	7.4	17	92	4.5%	17
UT	106	6.2	26	2	1.9%	34
VA	407	4.9	35	7	1.7%	38
VT	13	1.8	51	0	0.0%	49
WA	325	6.9	21	16	4.9%	15
WI	449	6.7	23	7	1.6%	41
WV	211	7.5	14	4	1.9%	33
WY	40	5.8	31	2	5.0%	11

Figure 9: Infection Control (F880) citation rate and severity by state (2018-20).

Broken Promises: An Assessment of Federal Data on Nursing Home Oversight

	Infection Control Citations (F880)	Annual IC Rate (per 1k residents)	Rank: IC Rate	Harm (G+) IC	% Harm (G+) IC	Rank: % Harm IC (G+)
Region 1	1,333	5.5	7	18	1.4%	10
Region 2	932	2.1	10	22	2.4%	8
Region 3	1,793	4.2	8	35	2.0%	9
Region 4	2,573	3.4	9	92	3.6%	3
Region 5	5,938	7.6	5	217	3.7%	2
Region 6	3,342	7.0	6	113	3.4%	5
Region 7	2,013	7.6	3	71	3.5%	4
Region 8	898	7.6	4	26	2.9%	6
Region 9	3,059	8.2	1	84	2.7%	7
Region 10	673	8.0	2	39	5.8%	1



Sources:

CMS Health Deficiencies (Downloaded March 2021; excludes surveys before 2018 and after 2021). MDS 3.0 Frequency Reports (2018-20). See "Identification Information - Gender (A0800)."

Notes:

Infection Prevention & Control citations (F880) per 1k residents from 2018-20.
 Harm: citation rated G or above.
 Immediate Jeopardy (IJ): citation rated J or above.



Figure 10: Infection Control (F880) citation rate and severity by region (2018-20).

Interactive charts and maps are available at <https://nursinghome411.org/survey-data-report/>.