

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Office of Inspector General



Special Focus Facility Program

CMS's Special Focus Facility Program for Nursing
Homes Has Not Yielded Lasting Improvements

What is the SFF Program?

The program includes the worst performing nursing homes in each State based on survey outcomes.

Since 2014, there are 88 nursing homes in the SFF program across the U.S.

Nursing homes receive enhanced oversight, including a standard survey every 6 months.

Agenda



Main Study Questions

-  Did nursing homes in the SFF program improve, and did they maintain these improvements?
-  What factors contributed to maintaining improvements?
-  How did CMS implement the program?

Methods

Analyzed 2013 – 2022 data on:

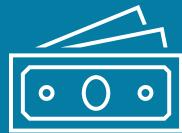
- Characteristics of SFF nursing homes
- Surveys, deficiencies, and enforcement remedies
- Staffing
- Ownership

Methods

Interviewed:

- State survey agencies
- CMS
- Participants in and graduates from SFF program

Characteristics of Nursing Homes in the SFF Program



SFFs are overwhelmingly for-profit facilities.



Infection control is most common deficiency before selection.

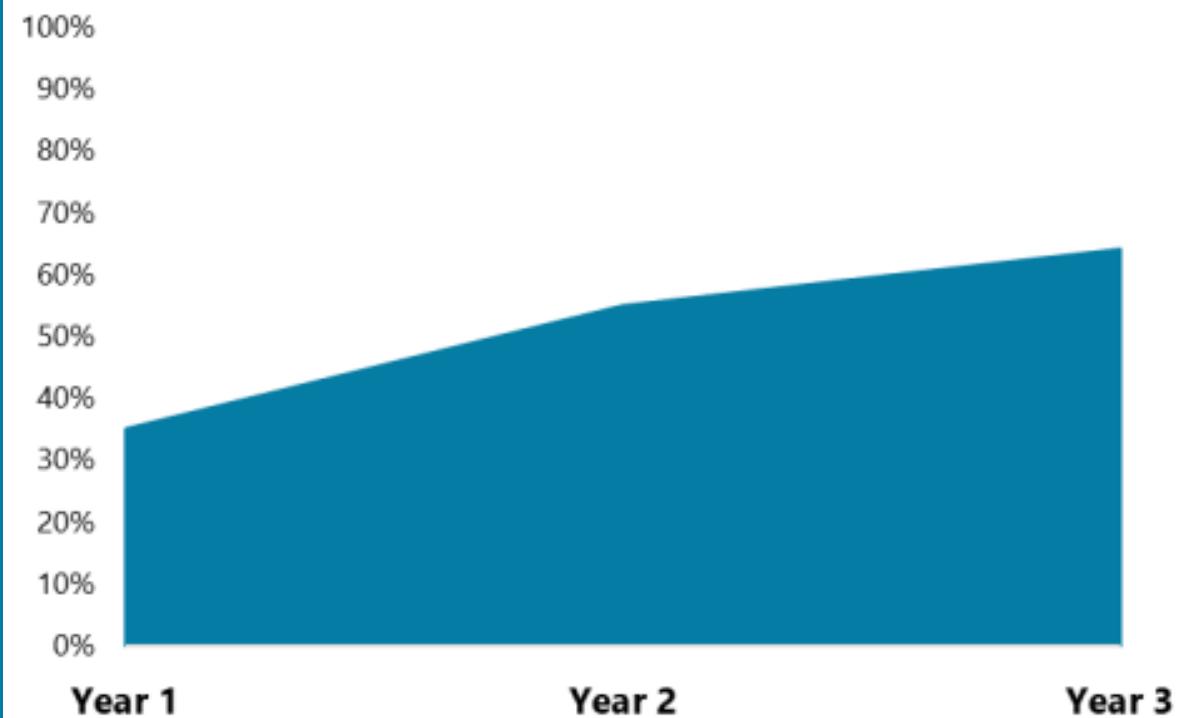


About three-quarters of SFFs graduate.

Main Findings: Deficiencies

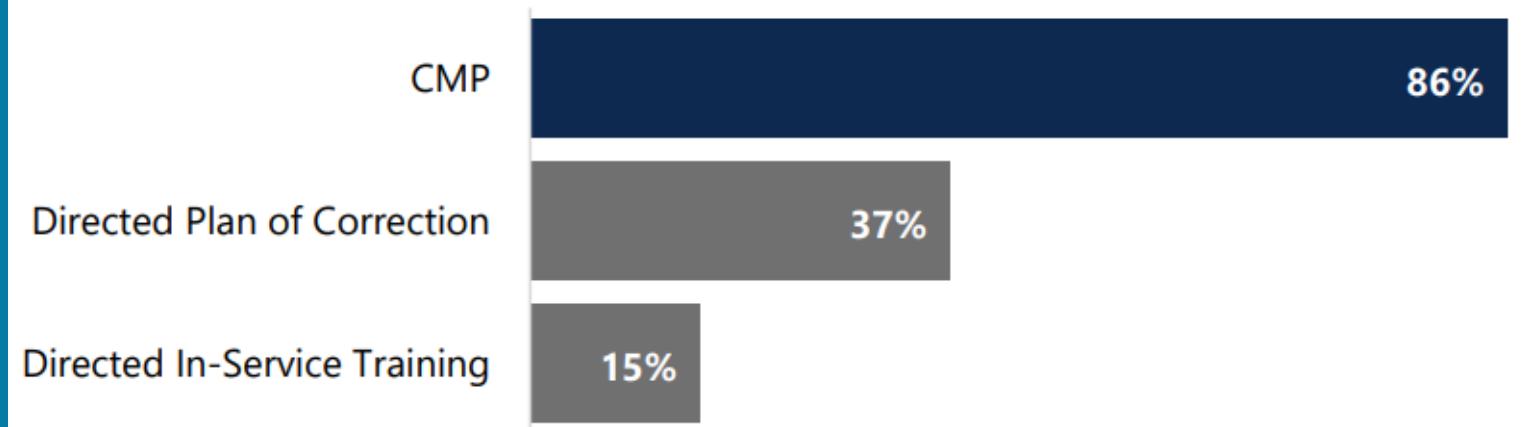
Of these nursing homes, 38 percent received an IJ and 22 percent received a deficiency for abuse.

Exhibit 1. Within 3 years, 64 percent of SFF graduates received a serious deficiency postgraduation (n=495).



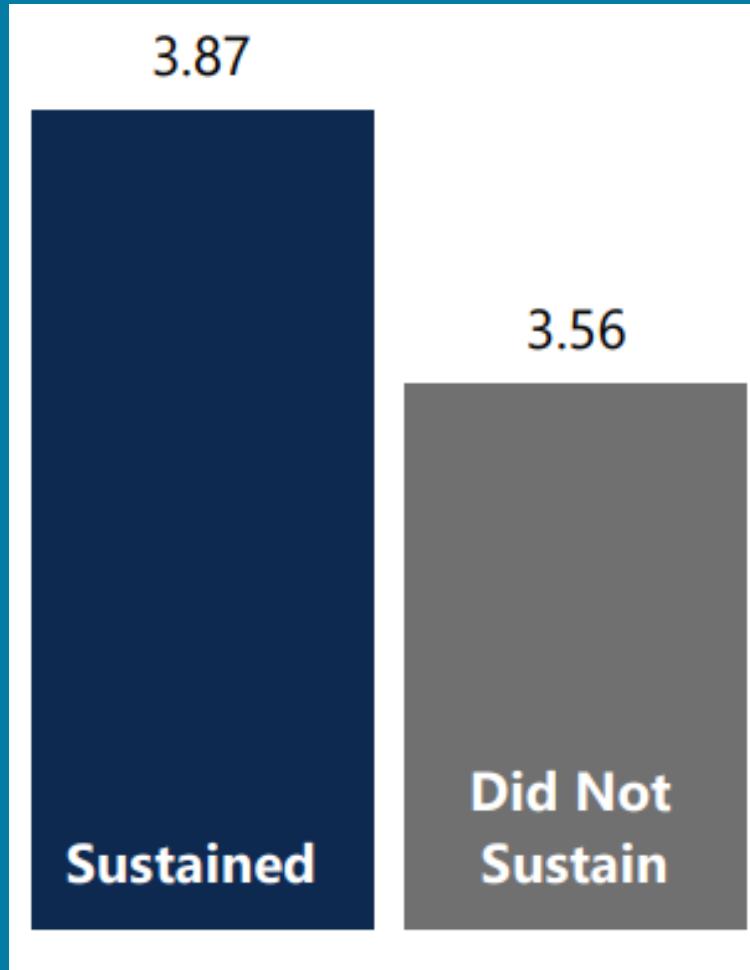
Main Findings: Enforcement

Exhibit 2. From 2013 through 2022, most nursing homes that graduated from the SFF program and did not maintain improvements received CMPs; far fewer received other kinds of enforcement remedies (n=385).



CMS rarely used State monitoring, temporary management, or termination.

Main Findings: Staffing

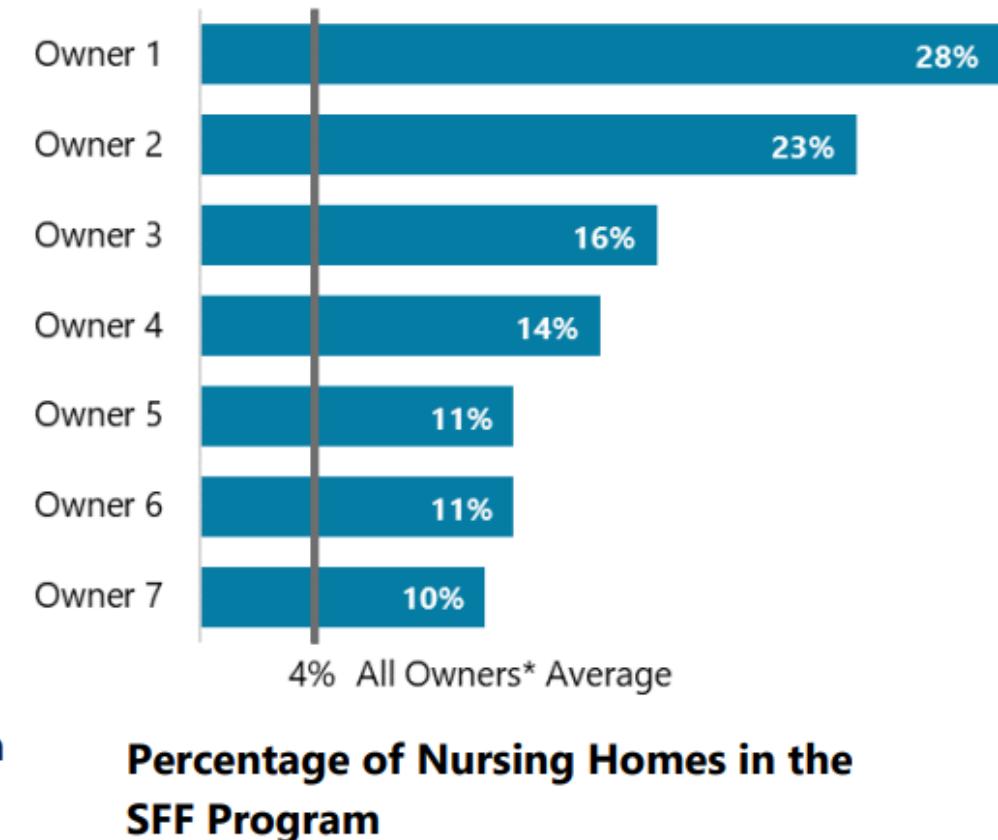


Higher staffing levels mean that SFF grads are more likely to maintain their quality improvements over time.

Main Findings: Ownership

State survey agencies and nursing homes told us that ownership plays a key role in quality.

Exhibit 4. Seven owners had a high proportion of their associated nursing homes in the SFF program from 2015 through 2022.



Main Findings: State-Level Initiatives

Examples of State-level strategies to support quality improvement at SFFs



Quality monitoring provided by State



Settlement agreements between States and SFFs



Technical assistance

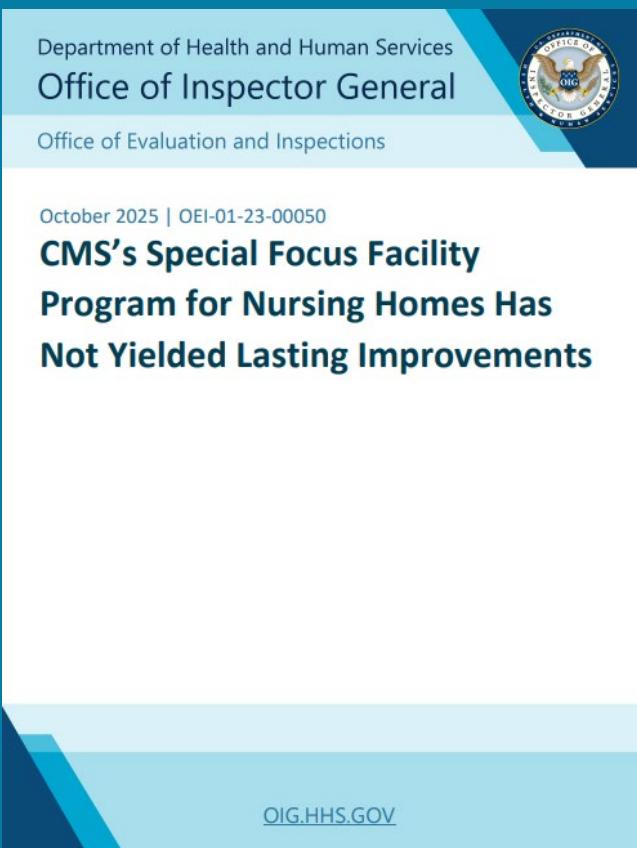
Six of ten State survey agencies that we interviewed described their State-level initiatives as important factors in nursing home improvement.

Recommendations

1. Impose more nonfinancial remedies that encourage sustained compliance.
2. Assess enhanced enforcement actions for SFF grads.
3. Incorporate ownership information into program.

Links to Reports

[CMS's Special Focus Facility Program for Nursing Homes Has Not Yielded Lasting Improvements](#)
(OEI-01-23-00052)



[Special Focus Facility Program Nursing Homes, 2013–2022 \(OEI-01-23-00052\)](#)

