

SENIOR CARE POLICY BRIEF

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NEWSFLASH

- [Prices for nursing home care increased 3.6%](#) year over year in June, according to Altarum's latest Health Sector Economic Indicators. Among the major healthcare categories examined, nursing home price growth was second only to dental services.
 - ⇒ The increase highlights the rapidly rising price of nursing home care for consumers and taxpayers. As prices continue to climb, residents, families, and taxpayers should expect those resources to support sufficient staffing and high-quality care.
- A [recent GAO report](#) found that federal Medicaid and traditional Medicare spending for services provided in assisted living facilities totaled at least \$12 billion in 2024, and GAO cautioned that the true amount is likely higher because assisted living facilities are not consistently identified in federal data. GAO identified at least \$3.5 billion in federal Medicaid spending and \$8.5 billion in traditional Medicare spending for services delivered in assisted living settings. Medicare generally does not cover assisted living services or room and board, but it may pay for other healthcare services, such as hospice, provided to residents.
 - ⇒ The findings raise an important accountability question: as billions in federal healthcare dollars flow into assisted living, are federal and state oversight systems adequate to protect residents?

ENFORCEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

- A [growing number of state attorneys general](#) are pursuing civil and criminal actions against nursing home owners and operators over allegations of chronic understaffing, resident neglect, financial misconduct, and Medicaid fraud. Recent enforcement actions have resulted in multimillion-dollar settlements, lawsuits, independent monitors, and other reforms aimed at improving resident care and increasing accountability.
- [Federal prosecutors have charged 19 individuals in Pennsylvania](#) with allegedly defrauding Medicare and Medicaid of more than \$4 million, including through billing for home care services never provided. According to prosecutors, defendants allegedly submitted claims for care while purported caregivers were incarcerated, hospitalized, working other jobs, vacationing in Miami, or even outside the country.
 - ⇒ Fraudulent billing not only wastes public funds but can conceal situations in which older adults and people with disabilities are not receiving services that taxpayers are paying providers to deliver.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

- A [new BMC Nursing study](#) found that increases in registered nurse (RN) staffing and the proportion of nursing hours provided by RNs were consistently associated with fewer unplanned hospitalizations and outpatient emergency department visits among long-stay residents.
 - ⇒ The findings underscore that both the amount and composition of nursing home staffing matter. RNs play a critical role in assessing residents, recognizing changes in condition, supervising care, and coordinating clinical responses.

More RN Staffing Linked to Fewer Hospitalizations

The *BMC Nursing* study found that an additional 0.1 RN hours per resident per day – about 6 minutes of RN care – was associated with a 1.3% lower hospitalization rate relative to the sample average.