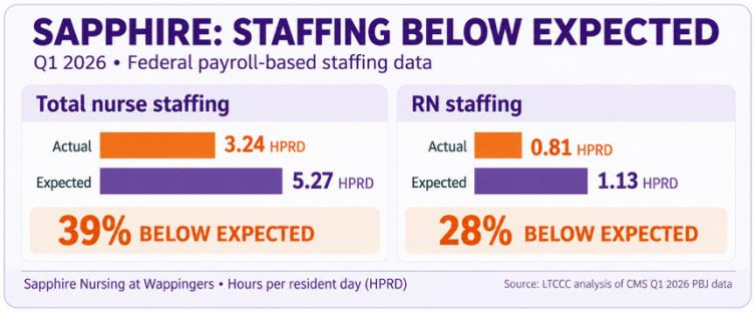
SENIOR CARE POLICY BRIEF

October 30, 2026

© 2026 THE LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

$6.8 MILLION VERDICT: WHEN UNDERSTAFFING LEADS TO NEGLECT

- A New York jury has awarded more than $6.8 million in a class-action lawsuit against Sapphire Nursing at Wappingers, a 62-bed nursing home in Dutchess County, NY, that is part of the Sapphire Care Group. The jury found that the facility violated residents' rights to sufficient staffing under state and federal law, resulting in widespread neglect. The award includes more than $3.2 million in compensatory damages and $3.6 million in punitive damages.
  - ⇒ According to *McKnight's*, residents experiencing delays in bathing, meals, medication, and incontinence care were sometimes left in soiled clothing and bedding. A 2018 state inspection also documented that staffing shortages resulted in residents being left in bed for extended periods and delays in basic care.



  - ⇒ Four individual owners were also found liable, extending accountability beyond the nursing home's corporate entity. The lawsuit was brought under New York Public Health Law § 2801-d, which allows residents to seek damages for violations of their rights.
  - ⇒ Understaffing is not simply a regulatory violation – it can deprive residents of essential care and cause serious harm. The verdict demonstrates the potential for residents and families to hold operators financially accountable. The defendants have indicated that they intend to challenge the verdict.

WHAT DO THE DATA SHOW?

- **Sapphire Nursing at Wappingers**: According to LTCCC's Q1 2026 staffing data, the facility provided just 3.24 total nurse hours per resident day (HPRD), compared with 5.27 HPRD expected based on residents' needs – 39% below expected. RN staffing was 0.81 HPRD, compared with 1.13 expected – 28% below expected. [Learn more about expected staffing here.]
  - ⇒ LTCCC's latest provider data show that Wappingers has one star for health inspections and two stars for staffing, despite receiving five stars for quality measures. Its most recent standard inspection was more than two years ago.
- **Sapphire Care Group**: Federal data identify eight affiliated nursing homes, averaging 1.9 stars for health inspections, 2.1 for staffing, and 2.6 overall. Yet the chain averages 4.6 quality measure stars.
  - ⇒ Inflation of so-called "quality measures" – which are largely self-reported by facilities – is a longstanding concern, since it can mislead the public into thinking that a facility is providing higher quality care than it actually is.
  - ⇒ All eight facilities reported total nurse staffing below expected levels in Q1 2026. The largest shortfall was at Sapphire Center for Rehabilitation & Nursing in Flushing, which provided 2.27 HPRD compared with 5.03 expected – 55% below expected.
  - ⇒ Recent federal inspection data identify serious deficiencies at affiliated facilities, including immediate-jeopardy findings at the Flushing facility and at Safire Rehabilitation of Northtowns.