

Department of Health Highlights Ongoing Nursing Home Inspection, Sanction Information Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

Harrisburg, PA – Since the beginning of February, the Pennsylvania Department of Health nursing home surveyors conducted 1,473 inspections of nursing homes, including 907 complaint investigations during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, 10 [sanctions](#) were finalized against nursing care facilities, which included the issuance of two provisional one licenses, and civil penalties totaling \$93,500.

“We know that congregate care settings, like nursing homes, have been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic,” Dr. Levine said. “That is why we remain committed to protecting the health and well-being of our most vulnerable Pennsylvanians by continuing to hold nursing home operators accountable, as necessary, to ensure they are providing safe care. If you see something at a nursing home that doesn’t seem right, we encourage you to speak up.”

The following breakdowns represent survey activity that occurred each month:

- April
 - 486 surveys of 336 separate facilities
 - 113 building safety surveys
 - 373 patient care surveys
 - 298 complaint investigations
- March
 - 537 surveys of 359 separate facilities
 - 150 building safety surveys
 - 387 patient care surveys
 - 321 complaint investigations
- February
 - 450 surveys of 314 separate facilities
 - 119 building safety surveys
 - 331 patient care surveys
 - 288 complaint investigations

Although annual inspections are not occurring at this time, extensions are in place according to [guidance](#) issued from the Center of Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS). The majority of other inspections are still occurring, but may be conducted virtually rather than onsite to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Individuals with complaints about a nursing home can file that complaint with the department in several ways. Complaints can be made anonymously by calling 1-800-254-5164, filling out the [online complaint form](#), emailing c-ncomplai@pa.gov or sending the complaint [in the mail](#) to the department.

In 2019, the department conducted 5,381 inspections of 3,637 nursing homes, including 3,285 complaint investigations. 213 [sanctions](#) were finalized against nursing care facilities, which included the issuance of 26 provisional one licenses, four provisional two licenses and one ban on admissions. Civil penalties in 2019 totaled more than \$2.5 million dollars.

The inspections, called surveys, include information on nursing home patient-care and building inspections. If a facility is cited for not following [regulations](#) during the survey, it must submit a plan of correction that includes what will be done to fix the issue and a completion date. The department will conduct a surprise follow-up inspection to ensure the issue is resolved. Surveys are posted to the website 41 days after the survey is completed.

The department also may issue a [sanction](#). Possible sanctions include a civil penalty, a ban on admissions, a license being revoked, or a facility being put on a provisional license, which requires, among other things, being subject to additional inspections. A provisional license can be renewed no more than three times. The department can return the facility to a regular license if it is satisfied that all issues have been corrected and it is warranted.

The department maintains a [searchable database](#), which allows the public to view patient care surveys, building safety surveys, size of the nursing home, type of ownership and additional information about each of the nursing homes in the state. The department oversees nearly 700 nursing homes and more than 88,000 beds within nursing homes in Pennsylvania, in addition to other facilities, including hospitals, ambulatory surgical facilities, home care agencies and others.

The Wolf Administration has [taken a three-pillar approach](#) to protecting the vulnerable residents living in nursing homes and other long-term living settings from COVID-19:

- Ensuring resident safety through testing, education and resources;
- Preventing and mitigating outbreaks; and
- Working in partnership with state agencies, local health departments and long-term care facility operators.

The Department of Health has been pushing personal protective equipment to all of long-term care facilities in Pennsylvania. Additionally, the department continues to work with ECRI as they provide technical assistance and our Healthcare Acquired Infection (HAI) team to further assist and remain connected with the nursing homes in order to best assist their needs.

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out for a life-sustaining reason, please wear a mask.

All Pennsylvania residents are encouraged to sign up for AlertPA, a text notification system for health, weather, and other important alerts like COVID-19 updates from commonwealth agencies. Residents can sign up online at www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-AlertsOpens In A New Window.