

Department of Health Highlights June 2020 Nursing Home Inspection, Sanction Information Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

Harrisburg, PA – In the [June 2020 report](#), Pennsylvania Department of Health nursing home surveyors conducted 269 inspections of nursing homes, including 238 complaint investigations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of these, 105 were COVID-19 specific. In addition, two [sanctions](#) were finalized against nursing care facilities, which included the issuance of one provisional two license, and civil penalties totaling \$20,560.

“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.”

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.

Although annual inspections are not occurring at this time, extensions are in place according to [guidance](#) issued from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS). The majority of other surveys are still occurring, both virtually and onsite. Virtual surveys provide the same level of access but are doing virtually to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

The number of long-term care facility deaths continues to decrease, as reflected in the long-term care facility graphs on the department’s [LTCF data page](#). New cases have increased over the past few weeks as facilities conduct universal testing to determine the prevalence of COVID-19. The majority of these new cases are individuals who were asymptomatic.

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.

More information regarding case information for all nursing homes, guidance provided to nursing homes, the orders in place and fact sheets and frequently asked questions documents to assist in regard to what is being done by the state to assist nursing homes can be found on the department's [COVID-19 nursing home page](#).

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-Alerts