



Protect Residents in Nursing Homes and Other Residential Care Facilities: URGENT Action Needed NOW

The unprecedented devastation facing our nation's long-term care facility residents amid the COVID-19 pandemic requires URGENT ACTION. This Associated Press [article](#) reports that over 11,000 people have died due to COVID-19 in our nation's nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. The number could be as many as 1 in 4 deaths from COVID-19 in this country. And we still don't even have a full accounting of just how many people in these facilities have the disease. Some may have symptoms; others may be asymptomatic and spread the virus unknowingly. We don't have the tests to know and we don't have the personal protective equipment (PPE) needed to prevent the spread. Meanwhile, in-person visitations in nursing homes and other residential care facilities are largely halted so in many cases loved ones may have no idea what is happening with their family member.

This is a terrifying time for the 1.3 million Americans living in nursing homes -- including the 15,573 in Washington -- and their families. Congress and the Administration must take urgent action to protect the health and safety of residents, staff and the surrounding community. This is a matter of life and death.

What Can You Do: We must prioritize PPE and testing for residential care facilities. This cannot wait weeks or a month. Access to PPE and testing is a matter of life and death in these facilities and essential to slowing the spread in the surrounding communities.

We must require the public release on a daily basis of the names of facilities with confirmed COVID-19 cases. This is important for the safety of residents, staff, and the surrounding community. We need accurate, public data to prioritize the response.

We need more attention to staffing to ensure residents get the care they deserve and need, including appropriate recruitment, training, retention, and compensation for the workforce.

We must make sure virtual visitation is available in every facility. Virtual visitation uses communications technologies to enable residents and their loved ones to connect with each other, including via phone calls and video-chat applications (e.g. Skype, Zoom), so family caregivers can ensure their loved ones are well cared for. AARP urges that facilities be required to provide and support virtual visitation for their residents. The ACCESS Act (S. 3517/H.R. 6487) would provide grants to nursing homes to support virtual visits, as well as enhance access to telehealth in these facilities.

Congress, Please Take Action Now: Make nursing home and other resident care facility safety a priority. Demand PPE and testing be made available in facilities. Require more transparency so we know which facilities have COVID-19 cases, require facilities to provide and support virtual visitation to residents and pass the ACCESS Act (S. 3517/H.R. 6487) to help get more technology and supports in the facilities. And protect resident and family rights regarding transfers and discharges. Ensure timely notice and clear and comprehensive information for residents and families, and prohibit facilities from discharging individuals due to inability to pay during this pandemic.