

Staffing Matters



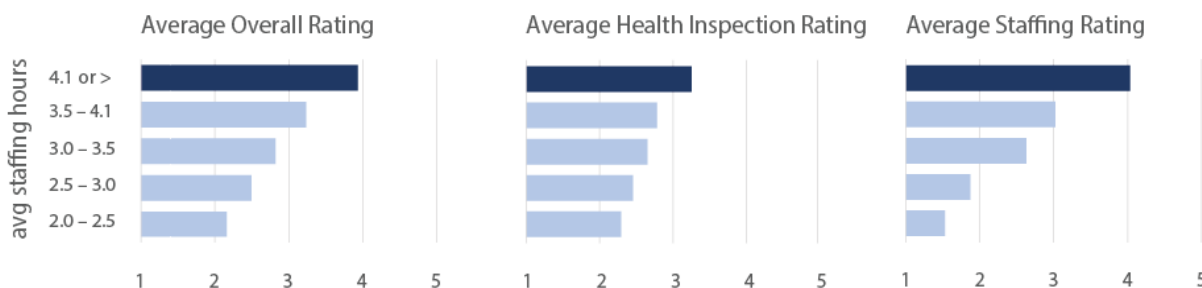
On February 28, 2022, President Biden announced a set of [nursing home reforms](#) that would be the most significant increase in protections for nursing home residents in decades. The cornerstone of his plan is to create a federal minimum staffing standard. Currently, federal regulations only require facilities to have “sufficient staff” to meet residents' needs. This vague and ambiguous standard results in states and individual facilities adopting their own requirements, leading to inequity in nursing home care. A baseline standard is needed.

In 2001, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a landmark report¹ which identified a specific minimum staffing threshold below which quality of care would be compromised. This minimum standard is 4.1 hours of total direct care per resident per day (hours per resident per day - hprd). CMS failed to implement this standard.

Overall Staffing Levels Make a Difference

Studies have repeatedly shown that nursing homes with higher staffing levels provide better care to residents.² Data³ from CMS reveals that nursing homes with higher averages of nursing care per day have higher overall ratings, better health inspection (HI) ratings, and fewer instances of abuse.⁴

Nursing Homes with Higher Staffing Levels Have Higher Ratings



As average daily staffing decreases, so does a facility's overall rating and performance in health inspections, and instances of abuse rise.

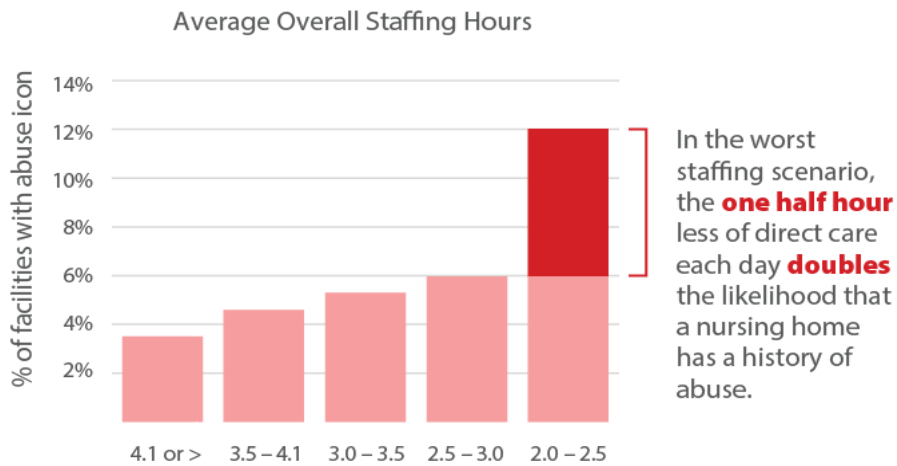
¹ Abt Associates for U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, “Appropriateness of Minimum Nurse Staffing Ratios in Nursing Homes.” December 2001

² Bostick, J.E., Rantz, M.J., Flesner, M.K. and Riggs, C.J. (2006). Systematic review of studies of staffing and quality in nursing homes. *J. Am Med Dir Assoc.* 7:366-376

³ CMS provides staffing data for weekdays and weekends. The data in the paper is for weekdays only. An appendix at the end of this report provides the data for these charts.

⁴ On CMS' website [Care Compare](#), each nursing home is assigned a rating based on a 5-star rating system. The overall star rating is based on 5-star ratings in staffing, health inspections, and quality measures. Staffing ratings are based on payroll data submitted by facilities to CMS. Health inspection ratings are based upon annual and complaint surveys conducted by state agencies. The quality measure rating is based on short-stay and long-term measures reported by facilities to CMS. For more information on these ratings, go [here](#). CMS assigns an abuse tag on Care Compare to nursing homes previously cited for abuse.

Nursing Homes with Fewer Hours of Direct Care Are Cited More Frequently for Abuse



Homes that Provide More Registered Nursing Care Have Better Ratings

An analysis of recent data from CMS reveals facilities with higher averages of care by Registered Nurse (RN) per day have higher overall, staffing, and health inspection ratings and fewer instances of abuse. Importantly, the 2001 CMS study recommended at least .75 hours of RN care per resident per day. Notably, 10,000 nursing homes - 65.7% of homes in the United States - provide less than this recommended amount.

Similar to the overall staffing rating data discussed above, the less RN care residents receive per day, the more likely they are to reside in a facility with poor overall, health inspection, and staff ratings. A decrease of six minutes of resident care, from .7-.8 to .6-.7, results in a 31% increase in the likelihood that a nursing home has a history of abuse.

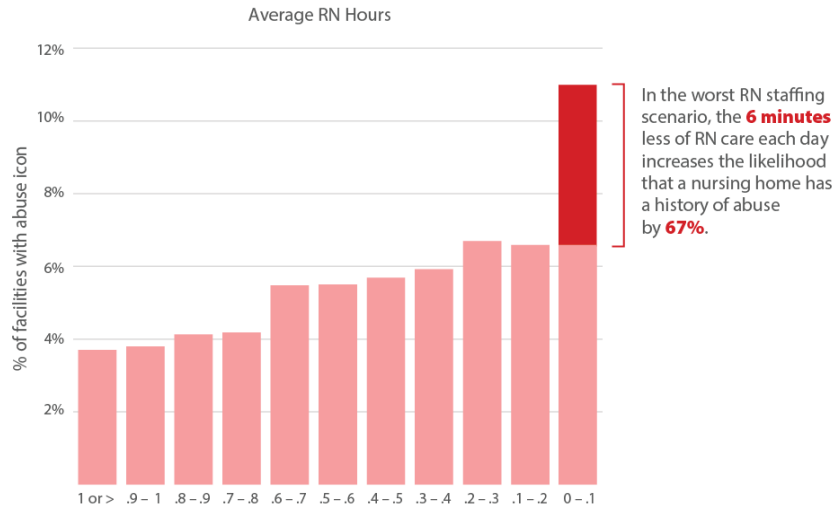
Studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic show the importance of staffing and that facilities with higher staffing levels and ratings had better resident health outcomes.⁵ This fact was particularly true with Registered Nurse (RN) staffing. One study of Connecticut nursing homes found that a 20-minute increase in RN staffing per resident per day led to 26% fewer deaths from COVID-19 and 22% fewer infections.

Nursing Homes with Higher Hours of RN Care Have Higher Ratings



⁵ Harrington C, Ross L, Chapman S, Halifax E, Spurlock B, et al. (2020) Nurse Staffing and Coronavirus Infections in California Nursing Homes. Policy Polit Nurs Pract 21: 174-186; Figueroa JF, Wadhwa RK, Papanicolas I, Riley K, Zheng J, et al. (2020) Association of nursing home ratings on health inspections, quality of care, and nurse staffing with COVID-19 cases. JAMA 324: 1103-1105.

Nursing Homes with Fewer Hours of RN Care Are Cited More Frequently for Abuse



Conclusion

Nursing homes with higher staffing levels perform better in almost all measures. It is essential that we act now to ensure the safety of nursing home residents and that they receive high quality care.

Appendix

Chart 1

Nursing Homes with Higher Staffing Levels Have Higher Rates

Average # of Nursing Hours Per Resident Per Day ⁶	Avg Overall Star Rating	Average HI Star Rating	Avg. Staffing Star Rating	% Of Facilities with Abuse Icon ⁷
4.1 or greater	3.93	3.25	4.03	3.50%
3.5 to less than 4.1	3.23	2.78	3.02	4.60%
3.0 to less than 3.5	2.82	2.65	2.63	5.30%
2.5 to less than 3.0	2.49	2.45	1.87	5.96%
2.0 to less than 2.5	2.16	2.29	1.53	12.03%

Chart 2

Nursing Homes with Higher Hours of RN Care Have Higher Ratings

Average RN Hours Per Resident Per Day	# Of Homes	Avg. Overall Star Rating	Avg. HI Star Rating	Avg. Staffing Star Rating	Avg. RN Star Rating	% Of Facilities with abuse icon
1 or greater	1604	4.07	3.23	4.27	4.68	3.7%
.9 to less than 1	794	3.79	3.03	4.03	4.36	3.80%
.8 to less than .9	992	3.66	3.02	3.71	4.04	4.13%
.7 to less than .8	1386	3.43	2.92	3.34	3.61	4.18%
.6 to less than .7	1771	3.19	2.78	3	3.2	5.48%
.5 to less than .6	1942	2.99	2.68	2.67	2.7	5.50%
.4 to less than .5	2091	2.85	2.61	2.35	2.25	5.69%
.3 to less than .4	1755	2.54	2.52	1.9	1.72	5.92%
.2 to less than .3	1118	2.28	2.45	1.47	1.21	6.70%
.1 to less than .2	501	2.07	2.43	1.25	1	6.59%
0 to less than .1	91	1.68	2.18	1.04	1	10.99%

⁶As of March 1, 2022, CMS' database contains 15,216 nursing homes. Because some homes did not provide staffing data, these percentages are based on 14,718 homes.