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CMS Announces Independent Commission to Address Safety and Quality in Nursing Homes

Commission will comprehensively examine best practices in responding to COVID-19 in nursing homes

As a part of President Trump's Opening Up America Again effort, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced a new independent Commission that will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the nursing home response to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Commission will provide independent recommendations to the contractor to review and report to CMS to help inform immediate and future responses to COVID-19 in nursing homes. This unprecedented effort builds upon the agency's [five-part plan](#) unveiled last April to ensure safety and quality in America's nursing homes, as well as recent CMS efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19 within these facilities. Tomorrow marks the beginning of Older Americans Month and, as we take this time to honor seniors, CMS remains committed to enacting policies that benefit our Nation's seniors.

"Safeguarding the health and, promoting the wellbeing and quality of life, of the most vulnerable and fragile citizens is a top priority for CMS," said CMS Administrator Seema Verma. "CMS has repeatedly taken early unprecedented, aggressive and decisive action to protect nursing home residents during this pandemic. And today, we are taking it one step further by asking that an independent Commission provide recommendations to further enhance efforts at the federal, state and local level, and help strengthen the Nation's response to Coronavirus and keeping residents safe in nursing homes."

Building on the Trump Administration's actions to protect seniors, the Commission will help inform efforts to safeguard the health and quality of life of vulnerable Americans as CMS continues to battle COVID-19 as well as preparing for future threats to resident safety and public health. The Commission will include leading industry experts, family members,

clinicians, resident/patient advocates, medical ethicists, administrators, academicians, infection control and prevention professionals, state and local authorities, and other selected experts. It is expected to convene in late May and develop recommendations on three key tasks:

- Putting nursing home residents first by ensuring they are protected from COVID-19 and improving the responsiveness of care delivery to maximize the quality of life for residents.
- Strengthening efforts to enable rapid and effective identification and mitigation of COVID-19 transmission (and other infectious disease) in nursing homes; and
- Enhancing strategies to improve compliance with infection control policies in response to COVID-19.

Additionally, the Commission will focus on identifying potentially innovative approaches to using nursing home data to allow for better coordination between federal surveyors, state and local entities, and nursing homes to address the current spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes. The Commission will also use data to assess efforts across the country to stop or contain the virus within these facilities. Additional information related to the Commission will be available soon.

“As we get ready to celebrate Older Americans Month, it is a reminder of how important the work we do at CMS is to ensuring seniors have access to quality care, not only during times like this, but at all times,” said CMS Administrator Seema Verma. “CMS will continue to use every tool at our disposal to protect the beneficiaries we serve.”

The new Commission is the most recent action in the Trump Administration’s rapid and aggressive response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The full list of CMS Public Health Action for Nursing Homes on COVID-19 to date is in the chart below.

CMS Public Health Action for Nursing Homes on COVID-19 as of April 30, 2020	
February 6, 2020	CMS took action to prepare the nation’s healthcare facilities for the COVID-19 threat.
March 4 , 2020	CMS issued new guidance related to the screening of entrants into nursing homes.
March 10 , 2020	CMS issued guidance related to the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
March 13 , 2020	CMS issued guidance for a nationwide restriction on nonessential medical staff and all visitors.
March 20, 2020	CMS announced a suspension of routine inspections, and an exclusive focus on immediate jeopardy situations and infection control inspections.
March 30, 2020	CMS announced that hospitals, laboratories, and other entities can perform tests for COVID-19 on people at home and in other community-based settings outside of the hospital – including nursing homes.

April 2, 2020	CMS issued a call to action for nursing homes and state and local governments reinforcing infection control responsibilities and urging leaders to work closely with nursing homes on access to testing and PPE.
April 15, 2020	CMS announced the agency will nearly double payment for certain lab tests that use high-throughput technologies to rapidly diagnose large numbers of COVID-19 cases.
April 19, 2020	CMS announced it will require nursing homes to report cases of COVID-19 to all residents and their families, as well as directly to the CDC. On April 30, 2020, CMS codified this guidance.
April 30, 2020	CMS awarded a contract which includes a new Commission to advise the contractor for reporting to CMS on addressing patient safety in safety and quality in nursing homes.

For more information on the Commission, visit:

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/coronavirus-commission-safety-and-quality-nursing-homes.pdf>.

CMS also released guidance to State Survey Agencies for the award and administration of supplemental funding provided by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136). For information on the CARES Act grants to State Survey Agencies, visit: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/cares-act-financial-guidance-state-survey-agencies.pdf>

This action, and earlier CMS actions in response to the COVID-19 virus, are part of the ongoing White House Task Force efforts. To keep up with the important work the Task Force is doing in response to COVID-19 click here www.coronavirus.gov. For information specific to CMS, please visit the [Current Emergencies Website](#).

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