

## Coronavirus Commission for Safety and Quality in Nursing Homes

As a part of President Trump's Opening Up America Again effort, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will have an independent Commission conduct a comprehensive assessment of the nursing home response to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Commission will be convened and lead by a CMS contractor and 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. These facilities are responsible for an increasingly vulnerable population of Americans who are often at high risk for complications from the COVID-19 virus. This effort builds upon CMS Administrator Seema Verma's [five-part plan](#) to ensure safety and quality in America's nursing homes, which was announced in April 2019, and recent agency efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19 within these facilities.

Since February, CMS has taken unprecedented action to address COVID-19 within nursing homes. On [February 6](#), CMS took action to prepare the United States for COVID-19 by reissuing longstanding infection control guidelines. CMS then moved quickly to address the rapid spread of infection by issuing guidance on new [screening processes](#) for facilities, on the use of [personal protective equipment](#) (PPE), and on [temporary restrictions](#) on non-essential medical staff and visitors in March. CMS immediately followed these actions by [prioritizing routine inspections](#) to conduct targeted surveys for infection control and complaints resulting in findings of Immediate Jeopardy situation. The Agency also issued a [call to action](#) for nursing homes and state and local governments as a means of reinforcing infection control responsibilities and urging leaders to work closely with facilities to determine needs for testing and PPE. Recently, CMS announced [payment increases](#) for certain lab tests that use high-throughput technologies to rapidly diagnose large numbers of COVID-19 cases. Finally, CMS will now require nursing homes to [report cases of COVID-19](#) directly to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and inform residents and their families and representatives of COVID-19 cases within their facilities in an effort to improve transparency. The convening of the Commission is the next step in improving quality and safety within 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. The Commission will include residents, families, resident/patient advocates, leading industry experts, clinicians, medical ethicists, administrators, academicians, infection control and prevention professionals, state and local authorities, and other experts selected through a nomination process. It is expected to convene in 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 meet the needs of all residents to maximize quality of life for residents.

- Strengthen regulations to enable rapid and effective identification and mitigation of COVID-19 transmission in nursing homes; and
- Enhance federal and state enforcement strategies to improve compliance with infection control policies in response to COVID-19.

Additionally, the Commission will focus on identifying potentially innovative approaches for using existing and newly available nursing home (and other) data to enable better coordination between federal surveyors and state and local entities to address the current spread of COVID-19 within nursing homes as well as to analyze the impact of efforts to stop or contain the virus within these facilities.

Participants will help to identify best practices to address COVID-19, which CMS or states may incorporate into a larger regulatory framework for effective oversight to better inform federal and state officials as well as nursing homes across the country, to better achieve compliance through improved enforcement solutions, and to improve the quality of life and overall health status of nursing home residents during the pandemic.

Additional information related to the Commission will be available soon. To keep up with the important and ongoing work of the White House Coronavirus Task Force in response to COVID-19, visit [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov). For information specific to CMS, please visit the [Current Emergencies Website](#).