






# JUST THE FACTS: WHAT CAUSED COVID-19 OUTBREAKS IN NURSING HOMES

**Location of a nursing home, asymptomatic spread and availability of testing** – not quality ratings, infection citations or staffing – were determining factors in COVID-19 outbreaks, according to independent analyses by leading academic and health care experts, as well as government researchers.

These findings are consistent with previous [research](#) conducted by the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL).

KEY FINDINGS	LOCATION OF FACILITY DETERMINED OUTBREAKS	ASYMPTOMATIC SPREAD AND AVAILABILITY OF TESTING WERE KEY FACTORS	QUALITY RATING AND PREVIOUS CITATIONS WERE NOT A FACTOR	NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN TYPES OF OWNERSHIP
 <b>DAVID GRABOWSKI, PHD</b> <i>Professor Of Health Care Policy</i>	<p>“According to preliminary research presented, larger facilities located in urban areas with large populations, particularly in counties with a higher prevalence of COVID-19 cases, were more likely to have reported cases.”<sup>1</sup></p>	<p>Grabowski: “It is spreading via asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic cases... We’re not going to get a handle on COVID-19 until we get a systematic testing and surveillance system.”<sup>1</sup></p>	<p>“COVID-19 cases in nursing homes are related to facility location and size and not traditional quality metrics such as star rating and prior infection control citations.”<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>“Characteristics that were not associated with a facility having a COVID case included... whether it was for-profit, part of a chain... These factors had no correlation with whether the facility had cases of COVID-19.”<sup>1</sup></p>
 <b>VINCENT MOR, PHD</b> <i>Professor, Health Services And Policy</i>	<p>Mor: “If you’re in an environment where there are a lot of people in the community who have COVID, the patients in the building are more likely to have COVID.”<sup>1</sup></p>	<p>“COVID-19’s ability to hide in plain sight will continue to crush expectations of halting its spread unless more and quicker testing at nursing homes sweeps the country, said a top U.S. researcher (Mor).”<sup>3</sup></p>	<p>“He (Mor) added that counter to some assertions, regression analyses show that infection rates are unrelated to quality rankings...”<sup>3</sup></p>	<p>N/A</p>
 <b>R. TAMARA KONETZKA, PHD</b> <i>Professor Of Health Services Research</i>	<p>“Outbreaks of COVID-19 in nursing homes are often a signal of the communities into which the virus is spreading.”<sup>4</sup></p>	<p>“Given asymptomatic spread and inadequate testing, staff often do not know which residents are infected.”<sup>4</sup></p>	<p>“We found no meaningful relationship between nursing home quality and the probability of at least one COVID-19 case or death... Indeed, the first death reported was from a nursing home in Washington State that had a 5-star rating.”<sup>4</sup></p>	<p>“We found no significant differences in the probability of COVID-19 cases by profit status, with for-profit nursing homes and not-for-profit nursing homes being equally likely to have cases.”<sup>4</sup></p>
 <b>CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC)</b>	<p>“Trends in reported COVID-19 cases among nursing home residents and staff members were similar to trends in incidence of COVID-19 in surrounding communities.”<sup>5</sup></p>	<p>“Symptom-based screening of [skilled nursing facility] residents might fail to identify all SARS-CoV-2 infections. Asymptomatic and presymptomatic SNF residents might contribute to SARS-CoV-2 transmission.”<sup>6</sup></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
 <b>U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE</b> <b>GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (GAO)</b>	<p>“...studies have shown that larger nursing homes with more beds and, subsequently, more residents and staff, may have a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19—particularly in areas of high community spread—and thus greater potential for more people in the facility to become infected.”<sup>7</sup></p>	<p>“A growing body of evidence shows that asymptomatic transmission may be a contributing factor to nursing home COVID-19 outbreaks.”<sup>7</sup></p>	<p>“An examination of the distribution of nursing homes cited with infection prevention and control deficiencies prior to the pandemic (2013 through 2019) and nursing homes with long- and short-duration outbreaks did not show notable differences.”<sup>7</sup></p>	<p>“We did not see differences between the homes with long- and short-duration outbreaks and their ownership profit status (i.e., for-profit, non-profit, or government).”<sup>7</sup></p>

<sup>1</sup> Provider Magazine, 5/11/20    <sup>2</sup> Characteristics Of U.S. Nursing Homes With COVID -19 Cases, 6/2/20    <sup>3</sup> McKnight’s Long Term Care News, 5/11/20    <sup>4</sup> Testimony To United States Senate Special Committee On Aging, 5/21/20    <sup>5</sup> Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 1/15/21    <sup>6</sup> Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 4/3/20    <sup>7</sup> Report: “COVID-19 in Nursing Homes”, 5/19/21