

2026 Quality Update

NURSING HOME QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS IN A POST-COVID ERA



RENEWED COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IS HELPING NURSING HOME RESIDENTS LIVE FULLY.

America's nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities have undertaken significant efforts to strengthen quality care in recent years with measurable results. Since the end of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (from 2023 through 2025), nursing homes are not only recovering but have progressed in multiple areas that are meaningful to patients and residents' quality of life, including clinical care, workforce stability and customer experience.

STAFFING

Staff stability allows nursing homes to offer more consistent caregivers, supporting better resident outcomes and improved resident experiences. Nursing homes continue to strengthen staff stability while also increasing their workforce.¹

11%

decrease in total
nursing and
RN turnover

Temporary staff
agency usage
has decreased by

45%

QUALITY MEASURES

Nursing homes report on a set of complex quality measures (QMs) to the federal government, which are then publicly reported on Medicare's Care Compare website. Nursing homes across the country are making progress on a variety of quality metrics across all patient types.²

SHORT-STAY PATIENTS

For patients who rely on short-term, post-acute care (<100 days) following an injury or hospitalization, skilled nursing facilities are helping patients restore mobility and their independence. **As a result, nearly 95,000 more patients have increased functional abilities, and nearly 30,000 more have successfully returned home. Meanwhile, more than 14,000 visits to the ER were avoided.**

7.2% ▲

Discharge
Function Score³

3.8% ▼

Emergency
Department Visits⁴

1.8% ▲

Successful Discharge
to Community⁵

¹ AHCA Nursing Home Workforce Report, January 2026.

² AHCA analysis of Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Nursing Home QMs data. All CMS QM data reflects the latest available data beginning Q1 2023. How QM data is collected by CMS varies between short- and long-stay measures (e.g., claims versus MDS data), and some measures are new, impacting when data collection began.

³ Discharge Function Score: Q4 2023 – Q1 2025.

⁴ ED Visits: Q1 2023 – Q2 2025.

⁵ Discharge to Community: Q3 2023 – Q3 2024.

LONG-STAY RESIDENTS

For residents who have more complex, long-term needs, nursing homes continue to improve on quality measures that help enhance their quality of care and quality of life. In each of the four QMs below, tens of thousands of additional nursing home residents have not experienced these outcomes.⁶ At the same time, **more than three-fourths of residents and families are satisfied with their care**, demonstrating that nursing homes are improving the overall experience.⁷

PRESSURE
ULCERS
37.1% ▼

CATHETER
USE
37.1% ▼

URINARY TRACT
INFECTIONS
25% ▼

WEIGHT
LOSS
11.8% ▼



CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Residents

84.3%

Families

75.9%

A PROVEN PATH FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT: THE AHCA/NCAL QUALITY AWARD PROGRAM

Nursing homes are committed to developing a culture of excellence to drive continued quality improvement. For 30 years, the AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award Program, which is based on the nationally recognized Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, has provided a systematic approach to improve in key areas including leadership, customer and workforce engagement, and strategy. The program is progressive with three award levels.



**134% GROWTH IN
TOTAL APPLICANTS**

Six states have integrated the program into their Value-Based Purchasing programs.⁸ Participation in the program is at record levels, once again demonstrating a renewed commitment by providers across the country to continue striving for excellence.⁹

SILVER AND GOLD AWARD RECIPIENTS OUTPERFORM THEIR PEERS

32%
have 5-star ratings,
compared with 18%
of facilities nationally.

Quality Measures

Percent Better Than National Average

■ Short Stay ■ Long Stay

Emergency Department Visits

+6%

+19%

Hospital Readmissions

+5%

+11%

Off-Label Use of Antipsychotics

+18%

+13%

Pressure Ulcers

+14%

+8%

⁶ Long-Stay QMs: Q1 2023 – Q3 2025.

⁷ Overall Customer Satisfaction scores calculated by CoreQ; data from Calendar Year 2025.

⁸ Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, North Dakota, Ohio, and Tennessee.

⁹ AHCA/NCAL Quality Award Program Fast Facts 2025. Participation growth since 2023. Star rating data from CMS Care Compare release July 2025. Quality performance data from CMS Care Compare and LTC Trend Tracker through Q1 2025.