

The COVID-19 pandemic is a historic challenge for long term care providers, but caregivers in nursing homes and assisted living communities across the country are rising to the challenge through their heroic service.

Responding to this threat, however, has resulted in increased demands on long term care staff. Residents must be isolated from others while still receiving the high-quality daily care and services they require. Coupled with the fact that some staff are unable to work because they are sick, lack childcare options with schools and daycares closed or have to be quarantined themselves, in part a consequence of inadequate availability of personal protective equipment (PPE), a workforce shortage crisis currently exists in long term care settings.

America rallied around our healthcare heroes in hospitals. Now is the time to do the same in long term care facilities, and a number of steps can be taken that will alleviate this challenge.

Bring in Additional Clinical and Support Staff

- Waive existing state regulations to allow:
 - Medical professionals to work across state lines
 - Fast-tracked training for positions such as nurse aides and feeding assistants
 - Current long term care professionals with lapsed licensing requirements (e.g., renewals, continuing education credits, etc.) to continue working
 - Expedited background checks
- If state waivers allow, actively promote the [Temporary Nurse Aide](#) and [Temporary Feeding Assistant](#) training courses within your state. Encourage residents who are unemployed or want to help with the crisis to complete the training program and identify a process to match them to a facility in need.
- Call upon the Medical Reserve Corps and the U.S. Public Health Service for medical professionals to volunteer.
- Reach out to all individuals in your health and human services licensing databases who are not working and are in good standing or license may have recently lapsed.
- Call on the public at-large to serve in long term care by:
 - Partnering with job search engines to offer job seekers a central hub to search for opportunities.
 - Offering incentives, such as a signing bonus (Example: [Massachusetts](#)).
- *Long Term Solution:* develop a plan to help attract, recruit and retain more individuals to work in long term care

Protect Caregivers While They're Serving in LTC

- Make long term care facilities a priority to receive personal protective equipment to help prevent current caregivers and residents from contracting the virus.
- Make long term care facilities (staff and residents) a priority for timely testing to carefully monitor cases among residents and staff.
 - Offer financial and logistical support to test all residents and staff (e.g., cover costs, have the state's National Guard help administer tests, partner with labs to expedite results, etc.).
 - Develop a plan for surveillance testing of staff for weeks/months to come (e.g., every week).
- *Long Term Solution:* should a vaccine be developed, prioritize the vaccine for staff in long term care, to prevent infecting residents.

Help Caregivers Get to Work and Stay Safe in the Larger Community

- Ensure options for childcare are offered for essential workers while school closures are in place. ([See sample ideas](#))
- Help long term care facilities connect with area food banks, restaurants or other businesses to help staff acquire groceries and meals and reduce their chance of acquiring the virus out in the community at-large.
- Offer additional “hero” pay to direct care staff to reduce the possibility of staff working multiple jobs.

Support Facilities with Outbreaks

- Establish a dedicated help line or website for long term care providers to call the state for direct assistance to streamline their requests.
- Have the state health department publicly post facilities with cases. This will help public health officials identify where to send urgently needed resources.
- Establish and deploy “strike teams” to offer support to specific long term care facilities with rising cases, especially among staff members who must stay home or seek treatment. (Example: [Maryland](#))
- Deploy the National Guard to facilities that need assistance with staff support, testing, cleaning and PPE (Example: [Georgia](#)).
- Call upon FEMA for additional staff support and equipment.