National Standards for Nursing Home Staffing Ratios
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Abstract

There are currently more than 1 million nursing home residents over the age of 65. Over the next 25 years that number is expected to double. As the number of nursing home residents increases, the possibilities of abuse and neglect due to inadequate patient-staff ratios will also increase. Concern over the quality of care provided in nursing homes has existed since the 50’s and continues today. During 1999-2001, over thirty percent of nursing homes in the United States were cited for an abuse violation that had the potential to cause harm to patients.

Research done by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has shown that as the ratio of staff to resident for nurse aids, licensed practical nurses and registered nurses increases, there is a decrease in the number of negative health incidents in nursing homes. Forty percent or more of current nursing homes do not meet these staffing levels. It will cost $9.09 billion to increase staffing levels, half of which will be paid by Medicare and Medicaid, but the expenses avoided by providing appropriate care in nursing homes will go a long way to offset the increases in costs.

The Nursing Home Staffing Act of 2003 /S. 1988/ H.R. 3355 would provide a national standard for staffing ratios in nursing homes that is commensurate with those levels found by CMS in its research, as well as increased funding to initiate the hiring of adequate staff.