

Nursing Home Social Work Staffing

- Background:** Current Department of Public Health (DPH) regulations require one (1) part-time social worker when a nursing home has more than 80 beds. There is no additional requirement for larger facilities or facilities with special care units. Residents in special care units (i.e., short-term rehab, dementia care, and behavioral health) have intensive, specialized needs and required dedicated staffing to ensure quality care. This outdated regulatory standard (set in the 1970s) compromises the well-being of residents and their families, both disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Low staffing is also detrimental to staff who report high rates of burnout, lack of time to form close therapeutic relationships with residents/families, and an inability to fulfill their responsibilities.
- Recommendations:** Modify DPH regulations to require one full-time social worker for every 60 beds and one (1) additional full-time social worker for each special care unit.
- Impact:** Bringing the staffing regulations up to date will lead to decreased staff turnover, lower burnout, and the ability for staff to provide the highest quality care. Most significantly the increase in social workers will ensure that residents have access to vital support to meet their emotional, social, and practical needs

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