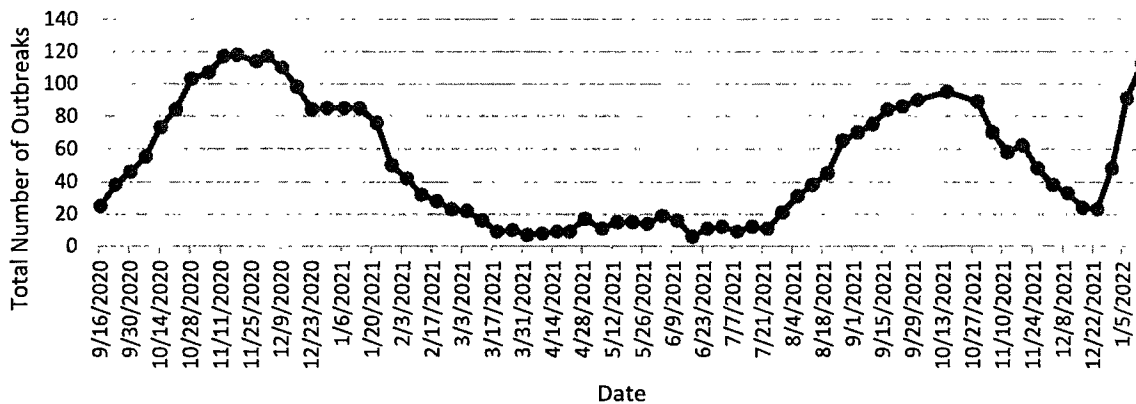


**Summary of Long Term Care Facility (LTCF) and Assisted Living Facility (ALF) COVID-19 Cases and Deaths
 (Montana, as of January 14th, 2022)**

COVID-19 Cases in Montana		
Total number of positive cases	212,078	
Total number of deaths	2,945	
	LTCF	ALF
Number of facilities by type	71	211
Number of facilities that have reported COVID-19 cases* (%)	71 (100.0)	180(85.3)
Number of facilities with ongoing COVID-19 cases** (%)	58 (81.7)	52 (24.6)
Number of COVID-19 cases associated with a facility (%)	4,972 (2.3)	3,647 (1.7)
Number of active COVID-19 cases associated with a facility***	356	251
Number of COVID-19 deaths associated with a facility (%)	379 (13.0)	237 (8.2)

Long term care residents are at high risk for infection, serious illness, and death from COVID-19. Data in this table will be updated weekly. *Cases in a staff member or resident. **Ongoing cases include any identified within the last 7 days ***Active = patient is still recovering and has not yet met CDC clinical criteria for release from isolation.

**Total Number of ALF and LTCF COVID Outbreaks
 by Week, Montana**



Mills Administration Announces Increased Payment Rates for Long-Term Care Facilities to Support 125 Percent of Minimum Wage for Direct Care Workers

December 29, 2021

Governor Mills announces she will also propose \$7.6 million in forthcoming supplemental budget to help nursing facilities with labor costs

AUGUSTA— The Mills Administration today announced a plan to increase MaineCare (Medicaid) payment rates for 225 nursing and residential care facilities across Maine beginning January 1, 2022.

The improved rates, which were overwhelmingly approved by lawmakers and signed into law by Governor Mills earlier this year as part of the biennial budget, will allow these facilities to increase pay for direct care workers to at least 125 percent of the state's minimum wage. They also come as the Maine Department of Health and Human Services implements much-needed MaineCare payment increases for other direct care workers across a range of services, including home- and community-based care, behavioral health, and long-term residential care settings.

Because of the complexity of the rate increases, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services had originally planned to increase rates for nursing and residential care facilities in July 2022. However, given the urgent need to further support direct care workers, Governor Mills directed the Department to utilize \$4.5 million in already appropriated funding to begin these increased payments on January 1, 2022 in line with legislative intent.

"Providing quality care for Maine's most vulnerable people takes commitment and compassion. Our nurses, direct care workers, and assisted living staff have proven they have both, especially during the pandemic," **said Governor Mills**. "Our direct care workers deserve pay that matches the important work they do for Maine people. It is my hope that increasing these rates will allow facilities to increase staff wages in the new year and help them recruit and retain committed and compassionate workers. My Administration is committed to continuing to work with the Legislature to strengthen Maine's long-term care system both in the short- and long-term."

"From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to today, nursing and residential care facility leadership, clinicians, and front-line staff have done amazing work in close partnership with the Department to keep their residents safe from this deadly disease," **said Jeanne Lambrew, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services**. "We will continue this collaboration as we work, in the short run, on staff recruitment and retention and, in the long run, on state-of-the-art reimbursement and workforce policies that continue Maine's reputation as the best state in which to grow old."

"Today's announcement is welcome news as Maine's long-term care facilities continue the fight against COVID-19," **said Angela Westhoff, President and CEO of the Maine Health Care Association**. "MHCA appreciates the Mills Administration's plan to expedite financial support to providers and their staff. Not only does it align with legislative intent, but it also reaffirms our collective commitment to supporting our dedicated staff who have logged many long hours during this pandemic caring for Maine's most vulnerable citizens."

Additionally, the Governor announced that she will propose as part of her forthcoming supplemental budget an additional \$7.6 million to reinstate a “supplemental wage adjustment” that will assist nursing and residential care facilities with labor costs through the rest of the 2022 Fiscal Year. If approved by the Legislature, the Department will include this rate increase for use in the first half of 2022 to complement the increased rates that support at least 125 percent of the minimum wage. To further alleviate financial strain on nursing facilities, the Governor has also directed the Department of Health and Human Services to waive penalties on nursing facilities that are experiencing low occupancy rates.

Throughout her time in office, and especially during the pandemic, Governor Mills has prioritized protecting the health and safety of older Maine residents, with some of the best results in the nation. After COVID-19 vaccines became available, Governor Mills adopted an age-based approach that prioritized vaccinating older Maine people first in order to save lives, and the Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine CDC worked closely with nursing facilities to vaccinate their residents and staff.

Earlier this year, the Governor also implemented a COVID-19 vaccine requirement for health care workers, including those in nursing and residential care facilities. The requirement is supported by the Maine Health Care Association, which represents nursing facilities across Maine. A recent study from the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that people in nursing homes are much more likely to die of COVID-19 if the staff caring for them remains largely unvaccinated.

As a result of these moves, 93 percent of Maine nursing facility residents and 98 percent of staff are fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) – one of the highest vaccination rates in the nation. Further, Maine has the seventh lowest rate of nursing facility deaths in the nation despite having the largest share of residents age 65 and older.

Providing Significant Support to Maine’s Nursing Facilities:

In addition to today’s actions, the Mills Administration has dedicated significant financial and technical support for nursing and residential facilities, including direct care workers, nurses, and other long-term care workers who care for older Mainers and residents with disabilities. These include:

- In June 2019, Governor Mills signed into law a biennial budget that dedicated \$8.5 million in one-time funding to nursing facilities and \$25 million to provide a cost-of-living adjustment. As a result, nursing facility rates increased, on average, by 5 percent for Fiscal Year 2020.
- In March 2020, at the onset of the pandemic, the Mills Administration announced it would provide additional payments to nursing facilities for extra costs associated with COVID-19, including staffing above and beyond customary levels to maintain proper ratios and to monitor residents and screen visitors, supplies and PPE, such as face masks and gowns, beyond the amounts typically purchased;
- In November 2020, the Mills Administration announced that it would reimburse nursing facilities for their costs to conduct Federally-required surveillance testing using commercial laboratories;
- In December 2020, the Mills Administration awarded \$5.1 million to health care facilities, most of which were nursing facilities, to cover expenses resulting from the pandemic;

- In August 2021, the Mills Administration awarded \$12.5 million to nursing and residential care facilities to help them cover expenses resulting from the pandemic;
- In September 2021, the Mills Administration announced \$123 million in one-time funding, including \$30 million in General Fund dollars authorized through the biennial budget signed into law by the Governor, for nursing facilities, residential care facilities, and adult family care homes to help address workforce issues by retaining current staff or hiring new vaccinated staff.

This is in addition to the considerable financial relief distributed directly by the Federal government to nursing facilities across Maine.

Further, at the onset of the pandemic, the Maine CDC hosted weekly calls for staff at long-term care facilities to provide updates on COVID-19 and on relevant guidance and to answer questions. The Maine CDC has also provided guidance and self-assessment tools for distribution to nursing facilities, and Maine was also among the first states in the nation to conduct universal testing at nursing facilities when a single case of COVID-19 was confirmed. The Mills Administration also provides emergency cache of PPE to facilities with outbreaks and provides same-day support and guidance.

Building a Health Care Workforce for the Future:

The Administration's plan to support nursing and other long-term care facilities in the short-run also complements the long-term work of the Governor's Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan, which encourages people to pursue health care jobs in Maine and strengthens the state's health care workforce. The Governor's plan includes new programs that make it more affordable for Maine people to become a health care professional and makes it easier to advance in their careers once they do. It also includes a new \$1.5 million recruitment effort, with \$1 million dedicated to promoting the value of work in health care and encouraging young people to enter careers in health care, and the other \$500,000 dedicated specifically to promoting direct care worker jobs, such as aides for older Mainers or individuals with disabilities.

Credit

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News

Long-term care providers win fight for \$400 million in COVID-19 relief to address workforce shortages



Kimberly Bonvissuto



OCTOBER 21, 2021

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (Credit: ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS / Contributor / Getty Images)

Texas long-term care facilities are poised to receive almost \$400 million in federal COVID-19 relief to address staffing shortages following pleas to state lawmakers.

Monday, the Lone Star State legislature unanimously passed Senate Bill 8, the American Rescue Plan Act Funds bill, which will provide \$178.3 million in one-time grants to be shared by assisted living communities, home health agencies, community attendants and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Skilled nursing facilities will receive \$200 million in a one-time grant.

The bill awaits the signature of Gov. Greg Abbott (R).

Providers can use the funding for staffing needs, including recruitment and retention bonuses, resulting from COVID-19.

Texas Health Care Association President and CEO Kevin Warren said that he appreciates that care for the elderly is a priority for the legislature, given all of the priorities it had to consider in spending the funds.

“While there is still more work to be done, this much-needed investment will help the profession’s staffing efforts, and for that we are very grateful,” Warren said.

Carmen Tilton, vice president of public policy for the Texas Assisted Living Association, told *McKnight’s Senior Living* that TALA worked with THCA and LeadingAge Texas to get long-term care included in the American Rescue Plan Act funding bill. TALA, the state partner of Argentum, specifically advocated for assisted living communities and direct care staff assisting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, she said.

“After being initially excluded from the federal Provider Relief Funds and left out of the filed version of the state’s ARPA allocation, we knew we’d have to redouble our advocacy efforts to get our provider communities the financial support they desperately need and deserve,” Tilton said.

The state Health and Human Services Commission will develop rules for distribution of the grants and will consider previously awarded federal COVID-19 relief dollars in its awards.

In September, THCA and LeadingAge Texas asked for \$400 million of the state’s \$16.7 billion share of American Rescue Plan Act relief funding. The associations said that the funding was needed to help strengthen the long-term care workforce to promote quality care and resident / patient safety.

At the time, Warren said that long-term care had been plagued by a years-long workforce shortage.

“The impact of this pandemic on residents and staff has made a challenging situation dire,” Warren said. “We can’t look away. We need to ensure the services are there for the daily that rely on us, and the Texas Legislature has a role to play in that.”

The two long-term care associations collaborated on a workforce-focused survey last month of Texas assisted living community and nursing home operators. The survey of more than 120 organizations found that since the start of the pandemic, Texas senior living and skilled nursing providers have experienced a 12% decline in employment, all have vacancies for direct care staff members, and 30% have limited move-ins due to chronic staffing shortages.

The THCA is the state affiliate of the American Health Care Association / National Center for Assisted Living, which recently released the results of its own, national survey, in which 61% of assisted living respondents said that workforce issues might force them to close.