

# New AARP Analysis: COVID-19 Deaths in Nursing Homes Increased 400% from August to September 2021 in Iowa



## *Vaccination Rates in Iowa's Nursing Homes Slowly Increasing*

**Des Moines**—COVID-19 continued to take a deadly toll on nursing home residents and staff in Iowa in the four weeks ending September 19, according to the latest data from AARP's Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard. Iowa's nursing home resident deaths from COVID-19 increased from a rate of .03 per 100 residents in mid-August to .15 in mid-September. Nationally, resident deaths from coronavirus doubled since the last dashboard release, with more than 2,000 lives lost in nursing homes during the same time period. New infections among residents and staff in Iowa also increased. Resident cases went from .36 to 1.96 per 100 residents, and new staff cases increased from 1.68 to 3.51 per 100 residents. Cases and deaths would be even higher if not for the availability of vaccines, underscoring the importance of continuing access to COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots for eligible residents and staff.

Vaccination rates among nursing home residents and staff also increased, with 93% of residents and 67.5% of staff fully vaccinated as of September 19 (up from 92% and 65% in mid-August.) Nationally, more than half of health care staff in nursing homes are now vaccinated in every state. AARP has called on nursing homes and long-term care facilities to require that staff and residents be vaccinated against coronavirus, and the Biden Administration has announced plans to require vaccination for staff in nursing homes and most health care settings that receive Medicare or Medicaid payments.

The new Dashboard also shows that chronic staffing issues in Iowa nursing homes are increasing, with now more than half of Iowa's nursing homes reporting staffing shortages. In the four weeks ending September 19, 51% reported a shortage of nurses or aides. Nationally, staffing shortages also rose by 3 percentage points for the second month, with 29% of nursing facilities now reporting a shortage of nurses or aides – on par with the highest level seen during last winter's COVID wave.

“It's now been one year since AARP began analyzing and reporting how COVID has infiltrated nursing homes across the United States,” said Brad Anderson, AARP Iowa State Director. “The increase in deaths among nursing home residents is a grim reminder that this pandemic is far from over. All staff and residents of long-term care facilities must be vaccinated against coronavirus to prevent more heartbreaking losses as we head into winter.”

Now more than ever, it's time to address Iowa's nursing home staffing crisis; ensure Iowa's nursing homes and other long term care facilities are providing high-quality care and safe environments for our loved ones, and rethink and rebalance our long term service and support system by investing more dollars in homes and community services so Iowans can receive care in their homes. Iowa Department of Human Services' recent application for federal dollars to invest in our home and community-based services and build a public database for direct care workers are great starts to address these needs.

### **AARP Iowa is advocating for Iowa to:**

- ensure quality care by reducing staffing shortages.
- help address workforce shortages by providing higher pay and compensation, professional development, career ladder, and greater flexibility for staff in long-term care settings.
- require nursing homes to use a large % of revenue received on direct care for residents—and to require these providers demonstrate to the state their direct patient spending.
- improve quality of care in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities by expanding the personnel and work of Iowa's Long Term Care Ombudsman program.

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Nationally, AARP has supported [several provisions in the reconciliation bill](#) currently before Congress that would help address long-standing issues in skilled nursing facilities and help ensure that residents are receiving quality care. One provision AARP supports would require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a study and submit a report to Congress on the appropriateness of establishing minimum staff to resident ratios for nursing staff in skilled nursing facilities and provide a process for implementation of such requirements.

The [AARP Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard](#) analyzes federally reported data in four-week periods going back to June 1, 2020. Using this data, the AARP Public Policy Institute, in collaboration with the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University in Ohio, created the dashboard to provide snapshots of the virus' infiltration into nursing homes and impact on nursing home residents and staff, with the goal of identifying specific areas of concern at the national and state levels in a timely manner.

The full Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard is available at [www.aarp.org/nursinghomedashboard](http://www.aarp.org/nursinghomedashboard), and an AARP story about this month's data is [available here](#). For more information on how coronavirus is impacting nursing homes and AARP's advocacy on this issue, visit [www.aarp.org/nursinghomes](http://www.aarp.org/nursinghomes). Medicare.gov's [Care Compare website](#) now offers information about vaccination rates within nursing homes and how they compare to state and national averages.



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