



Nursing Homes Need Access and Funding for Rapid-Response Testing

(as of 8/14/20)

Nursing home residents in the U.S. are in danger every day—and community spread among the larger population is driving a spike in new cases according to recent CMS data. There is no replacement for regular testing when it comes to managing COVID-19 in nursing homes and other aging services settings.

Why Testing Is Vital

- Asymptomatic people—staff, visitors and residents themselves—can easily infect others.
- It's critical to identify—in a matter of minutes—who has COVID-19 so they can be quarantined to prevent spreading the virus.
- Staff coming to work and not knowing they are carrying the virus—even for a day —is a major threat to vulnerable older adults.

The Challenge: Cost, Staff, Supplies & Two Types of Tests

- Tests are not immediately accessible or affordable for too many nursing homes and other aging services providers.
- Most nursing homes cannot afford the many supplies needed to conduct tests, send samples to labs, or train and hire staff to perform the tests—and these resources will be needed for many months to come.

Currently Need Both Antigen & PCR Tests

- Aging services providers need both antigen and PCR tests to identify risks and slow the spread of the virus.
- Antigen tests produce instant results, but the frequency of false negatives is still unclear. Currently, some state and local health departments don't accept antigen test results due to the high false negatives. People who test negative require retesting using more reliable PCR tests.
- PCR tests are more accurate, but currently take time to learn results. Many nursing homes are experiencing wait times of more than two weeks. Aging services providers must be prioritized alongside hospitals.

Testing is Expensive

- To conduct antigen testing on-site, care providers need testing machines, supplies, protective PPE and staff with the time and training to conduct tests.
- PCR tests require supplies, protective PPE and staff with the time and training to conduct tests, and then must be sent out to a lab.
- Conservative monthly cost estimate for a 200-employee nursing home to test staff just once a week is nearly \$160,000 per month.

There Is No National Strategy

- HHS is in the early stages of delivering antigen testing instruments and test kits to all certified nursing homes with CLIA waivers. Few devices that have been received to date and shipments aren't said to be completed until the end of September. This is a one-time procurement intended to supplement other testing efforts. Nursing homes can purchase additional test kits from the manufacturer.
- Every state makes its own rules about who must be tested, frequency of testing, and which tests are acceptable for nursing homes. Mostly tests for staff are paid for out of the provider's pocket. Few states pay for staff unless symptomatic.
- States are beginning to broaden their focus to include assisted living; only a few have requirements at this point. No states that we are aware of have testing protocols or requirements for home health.

What Older Americans and Their Care Providers Need

- LeadingAge is calling on Congress to deliver \$10 billion for a dedicated testing program for aging services providers. The testing provisions must be sufficient to keep up with COVID19's nationwide surge.
- HHS-provided antigen testing support for nursing homes helps only one care setting, and nursing homes will still face high costs for testing supplies and backup PCR testing.
- Instead of piecemeal funding, the U.S. needs a comprehensive and coordinated national testing strategy, funding and led by the federal government.

Costs Table for Reference:

Number of Nursing Home Employees	100	150	200
Weekly cost of antigen testing	\$2,500	\$3,750	\$5,000
Cost for staff time to administer antigen testing	\$940.80	\$940.80	\$940.80
Staff pay for test processing	\$1,575	\$2,362.50	\$3,150
Antigen test cost	\$5,015.80	\$7,053	\$9,090.80
Cost of PCR test (assuming 95% negative antigen tests, \$150 per test)	\$14,250	\$21,375	\$28,500
Potential weekly cost	\$19,265.80	\$28,428.30	\$37,590.80

About LeadingAge: We represent more than 5,000 aging-focused organizations that touch millions of lives every day. Alongside our members and 38 state partners, we address critical issues by blending applied research, advocacy, education, and community-building. We bring together the most inventive minds in our field to support older adults as they age wherever they call home. We make America a better place to grow old. For more information: leadingage.org