



Seniors and Employees are at Risk in Long-term Care Facilities

Proper compliance management can save lives and an organization's reputation.

For-profit nursing homes accounted for four times as many COVID-19 related deaths as publicly owned homes. ⁱ

Many long-term care (LTC) facilities, seniors' residents, and nursing homes experience extreme challenges regarding the health, safety, and treatment of residents and caregivers worldwide. These challenges are not new to the system. They are longstanding weaknesses resulting from a broken system that needs immediate help.

Many for-profit long-term care facilities seek to increase profits through staff reductions and lower wages leading to compromised quality care.

Ownership of these organizations varies across regions and countries. Whether they're government-run or privately owned, the vulnerable facilities tend to have a siloed governance, risk management and compliance (GRC) approach. This approach allows for gaps in communication, data and reporting that all contribute to potential risks.

Inside long-term care facilities

Long-term care homes provide a variety of services which help meet both the medical and non-medical needs of people with a chronic illness or disability, who cannot care for themselves for long periods. These services can be provided in a home, in the community, in assisted living facilities or in nursing homes.

In long-term care homes, seniors need help with everyday activities, that include bathing, dressing, grooming, using the toilet, eating, moving around and getting out of bed and into a chair.

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Reporting and tracking incidents are crucial to employee safety.

In May 2020 - 82% of COVID-19 deaths in Canada were accounted for in long-term care homes.ⁱⁱ

And the most recent reports show 45% of COVID-19 deaths across 42 states in the US are accounted for in long-term care facilities.ⁱⁱⁱ

A large and diverse workforce is required to take care of all residents' needs, as well as the entire facility.

Care includes:

- Nursing and personal care on a 24-hour basis
- Access to health professionals and medical services
- Meals (including special diets)
- Bed linens and laundry
- Personal hygiene supplies
- Medical/clinical supplies (e.g., walkers and wheelchairs for occasional use)
- Housekeeping
- Social and recreational programs
- Assistance with activities of daily living

When there are staff shortages, seniors suffer neglect and are at serious risk for their lives. There are additional risks for staff members too, including:

- Violence
- Occupational injuries
- Slips, trips and falls

Often these incidents go unreported because there's either no protocol or system to use to report a mishap or workers feel there would be no follow-up or could be at risk of losing their job, depending on the nature of the incident.

Why are seniors so vulnerable to infections?

Residents in long-term care homes often have compromised immune systems or are already dealing with health concerns. Managing infections such as elderly influenza and bacterial pneumonia are common. In fact, one-third of all deaths in seniors over 65 results from infectious diseases.



COVID-19 proved how vulnerable seniors are and revealed the shocking conditions in some long-term care homes that lead to their deaths, including residents in critical condition abandoned by staff, and workers without protective equipment.

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Education and employee training are essential in reducing risks.

Simple cleaning and disinfection of surfaces may be one of the key defenses in the battle against common infections and pandemic exposures like COVID-19.



Staff Shortages

Due to low wages, the long-term care industry has always had issues finding staff. Therefore, forcing workers to work at more than one care home to make ends meet. If a worker has an infection, they can quickly spread it to others at all homes by simply touching hard surfaces or by sneezing or coughing. Many long-term care staff describe themselves as overworked with little time to effectively care for residents.

Unqualified and untrained workers

Some long-term care workers have reported receiving little training or expertise in providing the proper care necessary.

Shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE)

The beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak posed a serious risk to employees, due to the lack of personal protective equipment such as face masks and gloves, thus leaving caregivers to fear for their safety at work. As a result, some workers quit their jobs, while others caught the virus and couldn't work.

Poor cleaning and sanitizing protocols

Residents who live in care homes spend much of their time in common living areas, communal dining rooms, and shared bedrooms, so the chance for infection runs high for everyone.

COVID-19 also exposed the noncompliance of cleaning protocols that should be in place within these facilities. Policy and procedure requirements were not followed, which increased the spread of the virus.

Education and proper training are essential in a cleaning professional's role, especially for those who come from disadvantaged areas of our society to fill these low paid positions. Workers in these roles are often not valued, and mentalities and attitudes towards these workers must change. They must be respected, trained, equipped, and financially compensated for the jobs they do. If the system remains broken - staff shortages and noncompliance will continue to be issues.

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Know your employees and third-party suppliers are qualified for the job.



Reports indicate long-term care demands are only going to increase, and significantly over the next couple of decades as the large baby-boom generation ages.

Third-party suppliers

Industry trends show that larger LTC operators tend to hire in-house staff to run their rehab and therapy services. While smaller or private providers often outsource these jobs to contractors because there's a cost advantage.

Third-party suppliers are also required to run and maintain facility operations like plumbing and repairs as well as new building construction, renovations, landscaping, security, food services and hazmat abatement. These suppliers will require different certifications, insurance levels, permits and workforce requirements to ensure that they can effectively support the LTC operator.

There are several common factors across all organizations that put both residents and staff in danger. Efficiently tracking and managing employee and third-party supplier data to ensure all workers meet compliance requirements is an important step to help mitigate risks.

Steps to help mitigate risks

- ✓ Ensure employees and suppliers are qualified – track requirements
- ✓ Provide proper training and education
- ✓ Provide a process to report incidents
- ✓ Provide timely/updated communication

According to a United Nations report in 2019, estimates show the number of people above 60 years of age will double between 2019 and 2050 from 703 million to 1.5 billion.^{iv}

Mitigate risk and save lives

A work-related accident, injury, or illness can not only put an employee out of work and affect their quality of life, but it can also damage an organization's productivity and reputation. And the cost to an organization can be substantial when in turn investing in compliance management from the start to keep employees safe would save you money.



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How ComplyWorks can help.

Verifying that your contractors and suppliers have the right training, certifications, permits and credentials will help ensure residents are receiving quality care.

With ComplyWorks' platform - you can achieve higher worker productivity, streamline processes, improve staff morale and reduce on-the-job injuries and the spread of infections.

It is more important than ever to expand training and education and to develop and implement additional competency standards so all staff—new and existing—can perform their jobs well and in a manner that is respectful of those receiving the care.

Here's a brief overview of what our solutions can do for you.

Corporate Management

- Full life-cycle contractor/supplier data management
- Contractor/supplier prequalification, verification, audits and background checks
- Online onboarding, orientations & job specific training
- Interactive dashboards to send alerts, notifications & reports

Workforce Management

- Tracking of certifications, permits & compliance documentation
- Tracking of asset, equipment & fleet
- Records management for insurance, health & security clearances

Worksite Management

- Management of contractors assigned to various projects, plants or geographies
- Management of contractor mobilization requirements
- Bid Management - find qualified suppliers for work at affordable rates

If managing your third parties and compliance is a challenge, or if you have not found the right solution to meet your needs, contact us today. We have helped many companies transition from paper, spreadsheets and other solution providers to our user-friendly compliance platform.

Sources:

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