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AARP sounds alarm on vaccination rates for Wisconsin nursing homes staff

MADISON, WISCONSIN – The latest release of AARP’s [Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard](#) incorporates new data on vaccination rates among staff and residents, and finds that just one in five facilities nationwide meets the threshold of having at least 75% of staff fully vaccinated. Wisconsin falls well short of that threshold with just 14.7% of facilities with 75% or more of staff fully vaccinated as of June 20.

Nationally, slightly more than half of health care workers in nursing homes were fully vaccinated (56%) and about 78% of residents were fully vaccinated as of the week ending June 20. Vaccination rates vary widely from state to state, ranging from less than half of staff (41%) in Louisiana to a high of 84% in Hawaii.

Wisconsin is slightly better than the national average on fully vaccinated staff (57.5%) and slightly better than the national average on fully vaccinated nursing home residents at 82.2%.

AARP’s analysis also found that 37.7% of Wisconsin nursing homes reported a shortage of direct care workers, which is a problem that has persisted through the pandemic and much higher than the national average of 23.5%.

“Nationally, more than 184,000 residents and staff of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities have died from COVID-19,” said AARP Wisconsin State Director Sam Wilson. “In Wisconsin, 43% of our nearly 7,500 COVID-19 deaths have been in long-term care facilities. We quite simply have to remain vigilant and focused on protecting our most vulnerable and ensure our frontline health care providers have the support and supplies they need to stay safe.”

“With cases once again rising across the country and considering the highly contagious Delta variant, every effort must be made to protect vulnerable nursing home residents. AARP encourages residents and staff in long-term care facilities to get a free COVID vaccine to protect yourself, your family and your community,” Wilson said.

AARP recently sent a [letter](#) to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, urging the agency not to become complacent regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, “especially for vulnerable populations like LTC (long-term care) facility residents,” and strongly recommending “that the federal government commit to working with states, long-term care facilities, and other entities, as needed, to ensure that those facilities can access and administer vaccines on a continuing basis for the foreseeable future.”

The letter applauds CMS for publishing data on nursing home vaccinations and calls on the agency to offer that data in a more user-friendly format. AARP has repeatedly urged transparency and public reporting about the impact of COVID on residents and staff in nursing facilities.

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 dashboard is available at www.aarp.org/nursinghomedashboard. For more information on how COVID is impacting nursing homes and AARP’s advocacy on this issue, visit www.aarp.org/nursinghomes.

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