

 CAPE COD TIMES

New means to assess nursing home quality

By Cynthia McCormick

Posted Dec 16, 2017 at 5:34 PM

Updated Dec 16, 2017 at 5:38 PM

Nursing home residents and their families have a new standard by which to judge quality of care: staffing levels based on payroll or other auditable data.

“Staffing is key to the quality of care and safety provided by a nursing home,” said Richard Mollot of the Long Term Care Community Coalition, nonprofit organization bases in New York City.

He recommended that people only consider nursing homes that provide more than 4.2 hours of care from staff per day. Our Island Home on Nantucket was the only nursing home on the Cape and Islands that reached that level of direct care, according to data released last month by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The Nantucket home averaged 4.4 hours of direct care daily by nurses and certified nursing assistants, while nursing homes reported to have the lowest levels of care locally — Wingate at Brewster and the Pavilion in Hyannis — both averaged 2.8 hours per day.

In addition to direct care hours overall, individuals looking at nursing homes also should look at how many hours of registered nurse care is provided per patient per day, Mollot said.

“RNs have the most training in terms of being able to provide an assessment of a resident’s condition and to provide clinical care,” he said. “Some nursing homes hire more LPNs (licensed practical nurses) and less RNs because it is cheaper to do so.”

Mollot said he would personally look for a nursing home with registered nurse staffing of 0.75 hours per resident per day, in addition to overall average staffing of 4.2-plus hours per day.

The care levels were established by a landmark federal study published about 15 years ago, Mollot said.

Few nursing homes on the Cape meet the criteria Mollot mentioned.

The JML Care Center in Falmouth and Mayflower Place Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in West Yarmouth had the highest ratios of RN care per day at 0.9 each, while Bourne Manor had the least at 0.2 hours.

“If I had to choose a facility with lower staffing I would check very carefully into the adequacy of care and services in the facility,” Mollot said.

“Does the facility smell good? Are there call bells ringing? Residents parked in wheelchairs or other areas?” he asked. “These are some of the signs that a facility might be short-staffed.”

Mollot said people looking at nursing homes should also look at the facility’s rating on Nursing Home Compare at Medicare.com.

“I would choose a facility with at least three stars if possible,” he said.

ADVERTISING

false

At least two Cape nursing homes — Cape Heritage Rehabilitation and Health Care Center in Sandwich and Cape Regency Rehabilitation and Health Care Center in Centerville — were not included in the release of data from CMS.

“Not all nursing homes are in compliance with the federal requirement to submit payroll-based

staffing data," Mollot said.

Nursing homes that submitted the data are marked with green circles on Nursing Home Compare, while homes that have not reported auditable data are marked by red circles with slashes through them.

Cape Heritage has three stars overall on Nursing Home Compare and is considered to be of "average" quality, while Cape Regency has one star and is considered "much below average" overall.

"More information is always better for consumers," said Bill Bogdanovich, CEO of the 124-patient Liberty Commons and chairman of the board of the Massachusetts Senior Care Association, a professional association for nursing home companies.

But participating in the new reporting process comes with a cost, he said.

With more than 200 employees, Liberty Commons turned to an automated system to track employee hours from an electronic clock that feeds the information to payroll and employs software to upload the data to the federal government.

"It cost us \$50,000 to do the integration," money that could have been better spent on bedside care, Bogdanovich said.

"Where are we going to put our health care resources and dollars?" Bogdanovich said.

"This was an unfunded mandate" that comes at a time federal dollars have slowed and state dollars have been flat for a decade, he added.

Mollot said the new CMS data will help identify "levels of care staff in their facility or facilities that they are considering."

For residents of nursing homes, "staffing is key to both clinical care and quality of life," he said.

— Follow Cynthia McCormick on Twitter: [@CmccormickCCT](https://twitter.com/CmccormickCCT).



SIGN UP FOR DAILY E-MAIL

Wake up to the day's top news, delivered to your inbox
