

AHRQ ECHO National Nursing Home COVID-19 Action Network

Rutgers Project ECHO is actively recruiting nursing homes in New Jersey to join an interactive training program to advance improvements in COVID-19 preparedness, safety and infection control, and nursing home resilience. In partnership with the NJ Department of Health, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, NJ Health Care Quality Institute and Trinitas Regional Medical Center and subject matter experts from around the state, Project ECHO will deliver a year-long program of classes and quality consultation.

This program is open to any Medicare or Medicaid-certified nursing home at no cost. CMS Certified Nursing homes that actively participate in the 16-week Network training can receive \$6,000 in compensation for participating.

The Challenge

- It is estimated that approximately 57,000 nursing home residents and staff have died from COVID-19, representing more than one-quarter of the nation’s known COVID-19 deaths.
- Nursing home residents are especially vulnerable due to their age, their underlying frailty, and their communal living conditions.
- Nursing home staff members who care for our seniors are among the most needed and most at-risk essential workers.

The Approach

The Network will operate as a 16-week interactive virtual community using the ECHO model. The model is based on the idea that to learn complex ideas, guided mentorship is needed in an “all teach, all learn” environment.

The weekly Network sessions are designed to create space to hear directly from nursing home staff about the challenges they are facing through discussion of real cases. All participants are encouraged to share best practices and learn from their peers – while benefiting from the guidance of nursing home and quality improvement experts. Each Network session will include a short lecture combined with case-based presentations and discussion.

The Goals

The New Jersey Network aims to help nursing homes implement evidence-based best practices to:

- Prevent COVID-19 from entering nursing homes via staff, visitors, and residents.
- Prevent greater spread among residents, staff and visitors, should the virus enter the nursing home.
- Provide best-practice care and treatment for residents who test positive for COVID-19. Protect staff from infection and ensure best-practice safety measures, to help staff build confidence in their work, feel safe from infection, and support staff retention.
- Ensure that residents who are dying from COVID-19 can safely receive visitors.
- Support NJ State quality and safety goals for nursing homes.
- Embed ECHO for learning, quality improvement, and self-sustaining process improvement.

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16-Week Curriculum Topics

1. Program Introduction: Preventing and Limiting the Spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes
2. Infection Prevention and Management: Guidance and Practical Approaches for Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during COVID-19
3. Infection Prevention and Management: Approaches to Cohorting during COVID-19
4. Infection Prevention and Management: Promoting Solutions for Making the Built Environment Safer During COVID-19
5. Infection Prevention and Management: Guidance for Cleaning & Disinfecting during COVID-19
6. COVID-19 Testing for Nursing Homes
7. COVID-19 Community Transmission and Nursing Home Screening Strategies
8. Staff Returning to Work Safely during COVID-19
9. Interprofessional Team Management of Mild cases of COVID-19
10. Advance Care Planning in the time of COVID-19
11. Promoting Safe Care Transitions during COVID-19 – Admissions, Discharges and Transfers
12. Promoting Safe Visitation and Nursing Home Re-opening during COVID-19
13. The Role of certified nursing assistants (CNAs) in managing and Supporting Residents and Families during COVID-19
14. Managing Social Isolation during COVID 19: Perspectives on Staff and Residents
15. Supporting the Emotional Well-being of Staff Caring for Residents during COVID-19
16. Effective Leadership and Communication during COVID-19

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