

IMPLEMENTING CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE THE COUNTY’S OVERSIGHT OF SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES

Skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) are an integral part of the Los Angeles County healthcare system, serving some of the most medically vulnerable of our residents. Across the state, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is responsible for the licensing and monitoring of SNFs. In Los Angeles County (County), however, the Department of Public Health’s Health Facilities Inspection Division (HFID) is responsible for overseeing operations, monitoring resident quality of life, responding to complaints of violations, and implementing improvements. Since the 1960s, HFID has contracted with CDPH to provide these monitoring services and is the only local agency in California to do so. HFID oversees 380 of the state’s 1,195 SNFs.

During the COVID-19 crisis, SNFs became the epicenter of the epidemic in the County. The facilities consistently had a high number of staff and patients test positive for the virus, and of the many COVID-related deaths that occurred in institutional settings, the vast majority were SNF residents. The crisis prompted deeper analysis into the standard of living within the facilities and exploration of how HFID could improve their response to complaints of violations within the system.

In light of the crisis, in May 2020 the Board of Supervisors directed the Auditor-Controller (A-C) and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to conduct a report and investigation into HFID’s oversight and operations of SNFs in the County, including recommendations on the operational and programmatic changes necessary to improve the County’s oversight of the facilities. The report and investigation detailed a number of programmatic and structural recommendations to enhance HFID’s oversight, and also recommended that the County hire an independent consultant to conduct a further comprehensive assessment of the agency. DPH has regularly updated the Board on the status of these recommendations, with most, besides the consultant’s report, having been completed.

MOTION

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Health Management Associates (HMA) was contracted to conduct this assessment and released the report in December 2024. The report, titled “*Health Facilities Inspection Division (HFID) Comprehensive Assessment*”, examines HFID’s staffing levels and productivity, management practices and policies, record keeping, and training. The assessment includes 52 recommendations intended to augment HFID’s ability to meet state programmatic requirements and, in particular, improve HFID’s ability to respond to complaints of violations. The recommendations center on bolstering HFID’s staff by attracting and retaining qualified individuals, implementing policies to optimize workforce productivity, and creating clearer guidelines for complaints and investigations. DPH already has, or is in the process, of implementing many of these recommendations.

As the only local jurisdiction that provides direct oversight for SNFs, the County is responsible for ensuring that SNFs are held to the highest standard when caring for the region’s most vulnerable residents. The County is uniquely positioned to implement the report’s recommendations and work directly with stakeholders to advocate for an enhanced system of care and ensure that HFID is best equipped to serve and respond to our residents in need. Not only does the County serve in a regulatory capacity, but our departments serve as advocates for these residents, promoting the structural changes they need.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Department of Public Health (DPH) to implement the recommendations from the HMA report titled “Health Facilities Inspection Division (HFID) Comprehensive Assessment” from the report dated December 6, 2024, and report back biannually in writing on the status of the recommendations,
2. Direct the Department of Aging and Disability, in consultation with the Department of Public Health and CEO-LAIR, to engage skilled nursing advocates and stakeholders, and report back in 90 days on legislative opportunities to increase protections and quality of life for SNF residents, and
3. Direct the Auditor-Controller to conduct a subsequent follow-up audit of DPH-HFID’s oversight of SNFs.

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