



Facility Staffing Differences

Skilled vs. Intermediate vs. Assisted Living

When the time comes that a loved one can no longer live alone, whether it is due to a physical disability or illness that creates an unsafe environment, or possibly a cognitive decline, the type of facility looked at is an important step in making sure the correct care is provided daily, or is available if needed.

Facilities must meet certain criteria to qualify for specific licensure in a state. Staffing requirements and nurse to patient ratios are different depending on how a facility is licensed. It is important when finding a facility for a loved one that has long term care insurance, that the facility chosen not only offers the care and environment they need, but also is licensed according the policy provisions so that the claim can be submitted and paid appropriately.



The staffing requirements may vary slightly by state; the statistics provided in this report are based on Federal law requirements for Medicare and Medicaid certified Skilled nursing facilities as well as Intermediate care facilities:

- Registered Nurse who is full time Director of Nursing 5 days/week; if fewer than 60 residents in facility, DON can also be a Charge Nurse
- Registered Nurse (RN) on duty at least 8hrs/day, 7 days/week and a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) or RN on duty 24 hours/day
- There are no minimum staffing levels for nurse's aides, those which provide most of the day-to-day care, however state laws indicate sufficient staffing is "nursing services to meet the needs of a resident."
- During the day, direct caregivers (RN, LPN, LVN, or CAN) on a 1:5 ratio with residents
- During the evening, direct caregivers are on a ratio of 1:10 with residents
- Overnight, direct caregiver to resident ratio is 1:15 residents

PLUS

- During the day, licensed nurses (RN, LPN or LVN) must be staffed at 1:15 resident ratio
- During the evening, at a 1:20 nurse/resident ratio
- Overnight, nurse/resident ratio must be 1:30

Most states housing regulations do not dictate the staff-to-resident ratio for Assisted Living Facilities, except in the cases of specialty units providing memory care. There are typically requirements for 24-hour staffing and additional criteria for education, experience and security background clearance for all staff members. Because the residents of an assisted living facility have varied levels of care, the facility will staff itself according to its needs. Most assisted living facilities will have the following:

- Administrator – the director of the facility
- Medical Director – In charge of the overall healthcare strategy
- Director of Nursing – responsible for overseeing all nursing activities
- Admissions Coordinator – responsible for resident admissions
- Dining Coordinator – responsible for all dining activities
- Nursing staff – may include RNs, LPNs, CNAs and PCNs (personal care technicians)
- Activities Director, Housekeeping staff, Custodial staff, dining staff, administrative staff & volunteers

Larger assisted living facilities may staff and RN or LPN on a full time basis, however the smaller facilities may just have one on call to stop by on an as needed basis. The nursing assistants (CNAs) and medical attendants are the ones that provide the day-to-day personal care to the residents. The overnight staff is typically much smaller than the day staff, as the residents in an assisted living facility are more active during the day.

Long term care policies will pay for care received at most facilities, as long as the ADL or cognitive requirement is met per the policy provisions and the facility is staffed and licensed based on the policy definitions and provisions. Quality of care is the most important part of this puzzle; and a larger facility is not always a better one. Interview the facility and obtain the proper assessments of the patient before making the final decision on where to place that loved one.

The following website was sourced and referenced for this article:

https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/nursing_home_staffing_standards_in_state_statutes_and_regulations.pdf
<http://theconsumervoicework.org/uploads/files/issues/Federal-Law-Regulations-Final.pdf>
<https://www.caring.com/questions/caregivers-to-residents-ratios-in-assisted-living>
<https://www.assistedlivingfacilities.org/resources/staff-and-administration/>

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