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Michigan's Skilled Nursing Facilities Maintaining Vigilance as Rates of Resident COVID-19 Cases Continue to Decline

The Health Care Association of Michigan (HCAM) announced today that the rate of new COVID-19 cases in skilled nursing facilities have significantly dropped since the start of the Federal Long-Term Care Facility Pharmacy Partnership Program at the end of December.

Data shows a 96 percent decrease in the rate of new cases from when the partnership program began at the end of December 2020 through March 22, 2021. Reported for the week of March 15, skilled nursing facilities experienced 36 new cases while the rest of the state saw a much more significant increase of 19,032 new cases during the same time frame.

A recent American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) [report](#) showed an 82 percent decline in the number of new COVID cases in nursing homes throughout the country since late December when cases were at their peak. Long term care facilities across the United States are seeing the lowest number of weekly cases since the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) started tracking back in May 2020.

One reason for the decline in facility resident cases is the success of the Federal Long-Term Care Facility (LTCF) Pharmacy Partnership Program. This vaccine program recently completed the third and final on-site clinics in all participating facilities in Michigan. More than 102,000 vaccines have been distributed to residents and staff by CVS and Walgreens during the three clinics.

“Making the residents and staff an immediate priority when the vaccines became available was a critical decision in the fight against COVID-19,” said HCAM President/CEO Melissa Samuel. “A plan is now in place for additional vaccination opportunities for new residents and staff as well as those who decide to become vaccinated in the future.”

According to the AHCA/NCAL a [new survey by OnShift](#) reveals that between December 2020 and March 2021, willingness of long term care staff to get the COVID-19 vaccine increased by 94 percent.

Facilities throughout Michigan are now open for scheduled visitation. These interactions are making a positive difference for the residents in our facilities.

“We are grateful those opportunities are happening and the visits between residents and their families our members are sharing via social media are heartwarming,” said Samuel. “But with the increases in positive cases in communities throughout the state, we must remain vigilant. Multiple national studies have proven that the best indicator of COVID-19 cases in a facility is the number of cases in the surrounding community. As Michigan’s numbers of positive cases are trending upward we must safeguard those in nursing facilities by continuing to follow protocols and guidelines as it relates to gatherings and social distancing. Everyone can do their part to help protect the residents in long term care.”

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HCAM is a statewide trade association representing 356 nursing facilities, including proprietary, not for profit, county medical and hospital-based long-term skilled nursing and rehabilitation facilities.