

## [Will Illinois Get Serious About Improving Nursing Home Care?](#)

A glaring oversight in current nursing home legislation impacting the State of Illinois may soon be rectified under a proposal under consideration by a legislative panel. Today, the legislative panel will vote on regulating the minimum amount of daily care each nursing home resident in the state receives from registered nurses (RN's).

Under the present staffing requirements in Illinois, nursing homes are only obligated to provide patients with 2 hours, 42 minutes of care each day. Further, while the law is specific concerning the staffing requirements for nursing home patients, there is little guidance as to the whom is to provide the care. The sole parameter in place concerning credentialing of nursing home staff is that each facility must have an RN at the facility for at least eight hours per day.

Likely as a cost-cutting measure, many [Illinois nursing homes](#) rarely provided RN staffing beyond what they are obligated to do to comply with the present law. Significantly, a recent Chicago Tribune [article](#) "State panel to vote on new nursing rule at nursing homes" cites a trend among Illinois nursing homes to continually reduce the care that patients receive from registered nurses. According to staffing data, 17% of Illinois Nursing Homes have reduced the time RN's spend with patients by at least 10% over the last six months.

If passed, the new proposal would gradually increase the amount of direct care registered nurses provide to each patient in Illinois Nursing Homes to at least 46 minutes per day by 2014.

From a quality of care perspective, I'm happy to see that Illinois lawmakers are finally recognizing that for the majority of nursing homes in the state, there is little independent initiative to provide any staffing beyond what is necessary to comply with the law. Considering that many nursing home quality experts believe that [RN staffing levels](#) is the number one factor in determining the quality of care patients' receive at each facility, there is no doubt that the time has indeed come for this important quality measure to be implemented.