

# Hwang: State to Order Independent Review of Nursing Homes' Response to Covid-19

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Governor Ned Lamont is ordering an independent, third-party review to be conducted of the preparation and response to the Covid-19 pandemic inside of Connecticut's nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

"I am thrilled to see that Governor Lamont is taking a deeper look into what is happening with Connecticut's nursing homes and seeing where we can improve this situation, especially should we ever face a similar health issue again," State Senator Tony Hwang said .

Hwang moderated a "Connecticut Covid-19 Informational Update on Nursing Homes" on June 8 to discuss the impact the pandemic has had on nursing, rehabilitation and assisted living facilities that house vulnerable state residents.

"Through discussions since the start of this pandemic, I have learned that nursing homes have long needed attention and support to make improvements to their infrastructures and health service systems," Hwang said. "Unfortunately the unusual circumstances presented by Covid-19 exacerbated and brought these issues front and center with devastating impact on residents, their families and frontline staff."

The discussion highlighted the current major challenges, the lessons learned and the future plans for improvement that include infection and death rates and managing the disease, in-person visitations clarification, PPE availability, testing availability (now required), impact of social isolation, and aging in place

Hwang was joined by experts in the field of senior services and advocacy including State Senator Kevin Kelly, Aging and Insurance Committee, and an attorney specializing in elder law who shared staggering statistics on how the Covid-19 deaths inside nursing homes actually makes up 70% of all deaths in Connecticut and 15% of the total deaths caused by the virus nationwide. He called for transparency to enable legislators and the public need to know what nursing homes are doing to move forward.

Nora Duncan, with CT AARP, stated she is very concerned about the damaging impact of isolation on this population emotionally, and psychologically, but when it comes to the physical care that these residents depend on, that is “above and beyond what the nursing home is able to provide.” The AARP advocated for virtual visitation starting in March as the state closed down, and that ability was not granted until May.

Marie Allen, Southwest Connecticut Agency on Aging (SWCAA) encouraged nursing homes and assisted living facilities to communicate not only the changes, but WHY they needed to be made and what is being done to address the situation.

Penny Young, aging advocate, noted that the CT Commission on Women, Children and Seniors has been incredibly helpful to seniors. She is concerned that seniors are cut off during this quarantine since they may even lack cell phone or internet service.

Additionally, Deidre Gifford, interim commissioner, Connecticut Department of Public Health, provided a statement, since she could not be on the call, that clarified the guidance from DPH on allowing outdoor visits and the increase of testing on staff and residents.

“The word needs to get out to people that they can see their older family members using proper social distancing and by wearing a mask,” stressed Hwang.

Hwang said the availability of testing and PPE is a problem for both staff and residents. He said that on June 1, Lamont issued Executive Order 7UU which requires staff at private and municipal nursing homes, residential communities and assisted living agencies to be tested weekly for the duration of the public health and civil preparedness emergency. These requirements have to be met, starting as early as June 14, but private managed residential communities and assisted living services agencies have until June 28, Hwang said.

The update was recorded and can be found at [CT AARP](#) and via the Southwest Connecticut Agency on Aging by clicking [here](#)