

# AHRQ ECHO National Nursing Home COVID-19 Action Network

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### Background

Supported by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and in collaboration with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), Project ECHO is launching a National Nursing Home COVID-19 Action Network.

We are actively recruiting **nursing homes** and **training centers** around the country to join this interactive community of practice to collaboratively advance improvements in COVID-19 preparedness, safety and infection control.

### The Challenge

- It is estimated that more than 57,000 nursing home residents and staff have died from COVID-19, representing more than one-quarter of the nation's known COVID-19 deaths.
- Nursing home residents are especially vulnerable due to their age, their underlying frailty, and their communal living conditions.
- Nursing home staff members who care for our seniors are among the most needed and most at-risk essential workers.

### The Goals

The Network aims to help nursing homes implement evidence-based best practices to:

- Keep the virus from entering nursing homes where it has not entered
  - Identify residents and staff who have been infected with the virus early
  - Prevent the spread of the virus between staff, residents, and visitors
  - Provide safe and appropriate care to residents with mild and asymptomatic cases of the virus
  - Ensure staff have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to implement best-practice safety measures to protect residents and themselves
- Reduce social isolation for residents, families, and staff during these difficult times

To achieve these goals, over 15,000 nursing homes will be able to participate in the Network and receive training and local mentorship.

### The Approach

The Network will operate as a 16-week interactive virtual community of practice utilizing the ECHO model. The model is based on the idea that to learn complex ideas, guided mentorship is needed in an “all teach, all learn” environment. The weekly Network sessions are designed to create space to hear directly from nursing home staff about the challenges they are facing through discussion of real cases. All participants are encouraged to share best practices and learn from their peers – while benefiting from the guidance of nursing home and quality improvement experts. Each Network session will include a short lecture combined with case-based presentations and discussion.

### *How will the training and mentorship be provided?*

- The Network will use the ECHO model as its foundation. ECHO is an interactive, case-based approach to learning based on adult learning principles. Weekly training sessions using videoconferencing technology are facilitated by small multidisciplinary teams of subject matter and quality improvement experts. Sessions combine short lectures that provide immediately usable best practices with case-based group learning. It's an “all teach, all learn” environment, where community providers learn from experts and each other, and specialists learn from the on-the-ground experience of community providers. [Learn more about Project ECHO.](#)
- Over more than a decade, Project ECHO has established a community of over 250 training centers (in our ECHO parlance, hubs) across the United States addressing a range of different diseases and conditions. These training centers or hubs include leading academic medical centers and large health care delivery systems in almost every state in the country. Project ECHO is recruiting over 100 training centers/hubs from our existing community and outside of it in order to be able to provide training to more than 15,000 nursing homes this fall.

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- Nursing homes will participate in a 16-week training and mentorship program in groups of 33-35 facilitated by a local training center.
  - The initiative will use a standardized curriculum developed by the IHI, but each training program will evolve to meet the needs of the local nursing home community.
  - The curriculum will be updated weekly to reflect new evidence, innovations in best practices, and changes in the pandemic.
  - Training centers will cultivate a virtual community of practice among nursing homes to foster peer-to-peer learning and provide additional mentorship.
  - Training centers will also provide rapid response mentorship for any nursing home that experiences a sudden increase in COVID-19.
- The Network and training centers will provide participating nursing homes with access to national and local experts in infection control, patient safety, quality improvement, and nursing home operations along with a library of implementation resources. The library will help nursing homes implement COVID-19 safety practices and include resources such as “how to” guides on helping nursing home residents with mobility impairments wear masks and translation of staff training materials and resident/family education materials into Spanish and other languages.

### **Who are the training centers that will be supporting the Network?**

- We are currently recruiting, training, and establishing training centers around the U.S. to support the Network. The training centers will launch this fall.
- Institutions that want to explore becoming a training center can [share their interest with us here](#).

### **Are nursing homes required to participate in this training and mentorship program?**

- No, nursing homes are not required or mandated to participate.

### **Why would nursing homes want to participate if the program is not mandatory?**

- Nursing home staff and professionals are dedicated to providing high-quality, safe care for the residents in their facilities. COVID-19 is a new and challenging disease that affects both residents and staff. Participating in the Network provides nursing homes with practical, useful information, skills, and resources. It also connects them to a virtual learning community of both specialists and their peers to ask and answer immediate challenges.
- Participating in the Network is free.
- Nursing homes that actively participate in the 16-week

training will receive \$6,000 in compensation in recognition of the staff time involved. This reimbursement is available to Medicare and Medicaid-certified nursing homes eligible to receiving funding from the Provider Relief Fund and that have agreed to its terms and conditions. The vast majority of nursing homes are eligible.

### **Are all nursing homes eligible to participate?**

- Both Medicare and Medicaid-certified nursing homes are eligible to participate.

### **What topics does the training curriculum include?**

- The first several weeks of the training program include sessions on:
  - Personal Protective Equipment Best Practices for COVID-19
  - Making the Environment Safe during COVID-19 Through Infection Control Practices
  - Minimizing the Spread of COVID-19
  - COVID-19 Testing
  - Clinical Management of Asymptomatic and Mild Cases of COVID-19
  - Managing Social Isolation during COVID-19

### **Where can nursing homes that want to participate learn more or sign up?**

- Nursing homes can [learn more and sign up to participate here](#).

### **When will training and mentorship begin?**

- Initial onboarding has already begun through a series of free webinars. Additional introductory webinars are ongoing. [Visit here for more information](#).
- Training centers will begin 16-week training and mentorship programs this fall and will continue to grow.

## To Learn More

- [Complete an interest form](#) to be connected to a training center near you
- [Explore becoming](#) a training center
- Join the [webinar series](#) *National Nursing Home COVID-19 Safety Conversations*
- Contact us at: [ECHONursingHome@salud.unm.edu](mailto:ECHONursingHome@salud.unm.edu)