
Assisted Living Facility Licensing

Program Evaluation Description

July 2025

BACKGROUND

Assisted living facilities offer long-term personal care for individuals who live in a common residential setting, such as a group home or an apartment complex. Assisted living facility residents typically need daily services and supports, such as meals, assistance with housekeeping, or help with medications, but may not require the intensive care provided in a nursing home. Different facilities may offer different levels of services and supports.

In 2019, the Legislature developed a licensing structure for assisted living facilities and directed the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to implement it. The Legislature created two categories of licensure: assisted living and assisted living with dementia care. Facilities licensed in the second category must meet additional requirements related to the specialized care they provide.

MDH began issuing assisted living licenses in 2021. As of June 2025, MDH had licensed over 2,300 assisted living facilities. Over 1,200 of these were small facilities with a licensed capacity of five or fewer residents. After initial licensure, MDH monitors assisted living facilities for compliance with state requirements, mainly through inspections at least once every two years.

The introduction of assisted living facility licensing in 2021 was a substantial change in how Minnesota regulated such facilities. Four years into the licensure process, legislators and stakeholders have questions about how well MDH has implemented the Legislature's intent and the extent to which licensure has improved facility operations and resident experiences.

EVALUATION ISSUES

1. To what extent does MDH's licensing process for assisted living facilities contribute to transparency and accountability?
2. To what extent does MDH's licensing process contribute to quality care?
3. How well has MDH complied with legislative requirements regarding licensing?

DISCUSSION

To conduct this evaluation, we will analyze MDH licensing and inspection data, and review selected applications for initial licensure, license renewals, ownership changes, and relocations. We plan to visit assisted living facilities and speak with administrators, staff, and residents. We also plan to conduct a statewide survey of assisted living providers. To the extent that national standards or best practices exist for certain licensing procedures, we will compare them to MDH's procedures.

As originally recommended by the Legislative Audit Commission Evaluation Subcommittee, this evaluation encompassed both assisted living facilities and nursing homes. Due to the large scope of the recommended topic and staff constraints, we have focused this evaluation on assisted living facilities.

This evaluation is scheduled to be completed in Spring 2026. For additional information, contact David Kirchner, evaluation manager, at 651-296-3322 or David.Kirchner@state.mn.us.