

Minnesota Department of Health: Nursing Home and Assisted Living Facilities Licensing

Topic Selection Background Information

April 2025

Program Overview	Nursing homes and assisted living facilities provide care and assistance to individuals who are unable to live entirely on their own. The Health Regulation Division at the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is responsible for inspecting and licensing these facilities to help ensure the health and safety of their residents.
Evaluation Questions	To what extent does the MDH process for licensing nursing home and assisted living facilities promote transparency, accountability, and quality care? How does Minnesota's process for licensing nursing home and assisted living facilities compare to national standards or best practices? To what extent has MDH complied with requirements related to nursing home and assisted living facilities licensing? How, if at all, have changes in ownership at nursing home and assisted living facilities coincided with changes in staffing, resident safety, resident mortality rates, overall quality of care, and costs? To what extent does MDH investigate the appropriate use of public funds for nursing home and assisted living facilities?
State Resources <i>Medium</i>	The Health Regulation Division received \$42 million in direct state appropriations in Fiscal Year 2024. The proportion of staff and funding dedicated to licensing nursing homes and assisted living facilities is unclear.
State Control <i>Medium-High</i>	Licensing requirements for nursing homes and assisted living facilities are established in state law, although nursing facilities that accept Medicare or Medicaid patients must also meet certain federal certification requirements.
Impact <i>High</i>	Thousands of Minnesotans utilize the state's more than 300 licensed nursing homes and more than 2,000 assisted living facilities. As the state's population ages—by 2030, more than one-fifth of Minnesotans will be 65 or older—demand for these facilities will likely grow.
Timeliness <i>High</i>	Legislators and members of the public have raised concerns regarding transparency in the licensing process for nursing homes. Minnesota's licensing law for assisted living facilities took effect in 2021, and now may be a good time to evaluate its initial impact.
Feasibility <i>Medium-High</i>	OLA could complete most of this evaluation using standard evaluation methods, such as surveys, document reviews, and interviews. Analyzing the impact of ownership changes will depend on the quality of available data. The scope of the proposed evaluation questions is very broad, so an evaluation may need to focus on certain questions, address either nursing homes or assisted living facilities, or be completed over a longer-than-typical timeframe.
Balance <i>Medium</i>	OLA released an evaluation of MDH's Human Resources Management Division in 2025. OLA last evaluated activities completed by the Health Regulation Division in 2018.
Discussion	Nursing homes and assisted living facilities provide essential care to thousands of Minnesotans, and an effective licensing process is vital for the oversight of those facilities. An evaluation of the state's licensing process could provide valuable insight.