

CDC and CMS Present Stories from the Field: Immunization Strategies for Long-term Care

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Colleen Frey is currently serving as the Director in the Division of Community and Population Health, Center for Clinical Standards & Quality at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Colleen is certified in Healthcare Quality, with a background in Infectious Disease Nursing, Informatics, Infection Control, and Emergency Management. Prior to joining CMS in 2021, Colleen was the Administrative Director of Quality and Patient Safety at the Detroit Medical Center's Adult Central Campus. Her Bachelors Degree in Nursing is from Oakland University, Rochester Hills, MI; and her Masters Degree in Nursing is from the University of Michigan.





Sabrina Chakhtoura currently serves as a Nurse Consultant for the Division for Quality Improvement and Innovation Models Testing, in the Center for Clinical Standards & Quality at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Sabrina is certified in Infection Control and Epidemiology, with a background in Infection Prevention, Population Health Management, Quality Improvement, Informatics and Acute Care Management. Sabrina has previously served as a Supervisory Nurse Consultant overseeing the Infection Prevention and Preventive Medicine departments at select naval medical facilities extensively on the COVID-19 response team in various roles, including COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake and Mass Vaccine Clinic Coordination.





Elisha Hall is Deputy Chief Medical Officer of the Immunization Services Division (ISD) at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Elisha began her career at CDC in 2017 as an evaluation fellow and later joined ISD in 2020. She served extensively on the COVID-19 response from 2020 through 2023 in various roles, including Clinical Guidelines Team Lead, where she led efforts to provide clinical guidance for the use COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. She began strategy and coordination efforts for long-term care vaccination in 2023. Elisha earned a PhD in Human Sciences, and MS and BS degrees in Nutrition and Health Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



Welcome from CDC

- Nursing home residents are at risk for becoming infected with and experiencing severe complications from respiratory viruses.
- There is an urgent need to protect nursing home residents against severe outcomes of respiratory illnesses by continuing efforts to increase vaccination.
- Immunization against Flu, COVID-19, and RSV remains the safest and most effective protection for reducing the risk of hospitalizations, long-term health impacts, and death, so our patients should stay current on their vaccinations.



Erwin Health Care Center Overcomes Barriers With Residents Receiving the 2023-2024 Updated COVID-19 Vaccine

Jason Bennett: Administrator

100 Stalling Lane
Erwin, TN 37650





Jason Bennett is the chief executive officer of Erwin Health Care Center (EHCC). Jason has over 30 years of long-term care experience including administrative and clinical expertise. He began his healthcare career as a respiratory therapist. Since 2001, he has led skilled nursing/assisted living facilities.

Jason is a proven executive leader who brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in developing strategic plans, promoting organizational mission, and driving operational outcomes with a focus on quality improvement.



Erwin Health Care Center Overcomes Barriers with Residents Receiving the 2023-2024 Updated COVID-19 Vaccine

- The majority of the residents are Caucasian (2% of residents are made up of other races).
- Majority of residents are long-term stays (remain until discharge to hospital or expire).
- Created a negative pressure hallway to accommodate residents with COVID-19 (helps to manage COVID-19 in the building).



Erwin Health Care Center Overcomes Barriers with Residents Receiving the 2023-2024 Updated COVID-19 Vaccine

- Few short term stays with an average 20-day length of stay. Post-operative rehab for orthopedic procedures as well.
- Secured unit for residents with dementia, as this adds another dimension to COVID-19.
- The average daily census is 95 residents (based on care compare data from the last twelve (12) months. <https://data.cms.gov/covid-19/covid-19-nursing-home-data>.)



Challenges to Achieving High Vaccination Rates

- Lack of trust from new residents.
- Misinformation provided by opinion-based news outlets and social media.
- Lack of knowledge about the benefits of the 2023-2024 updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- Concerns over whether they should receive another vaccine based on their current medical history.
- Vaccine fatigue.



Overcoming Barriers

- Building trust with new residents and their families by providing educational resources related to the 2023-2024 updated COVID-19 vaccine upon admission.
- Providing resources from reliable and reputable sources.
- Flexibility to offer the vaccine when it was convenient to the residents, as well as allowing time for residents to ask questions regarding their concerns.



Overcoming Barriers

- Staff has a positive attitude regarding the updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- Consistent re-education, provided monthly reminders on the importance of receiving the vaccine. (“Most important is not being pushy.”)
- Educational material is readily available for residents and their families.



Overcoming Barriers

- Education on a regular basis by many members of the staff utilizing educational resources from trusted sources, including CDC, FDA, and Alliant Health Solutions. “It was truly a team effort.”
- Providing a caring and trusting environment by encouraging residents to participate in vaccine program to keep themselves and others protected.



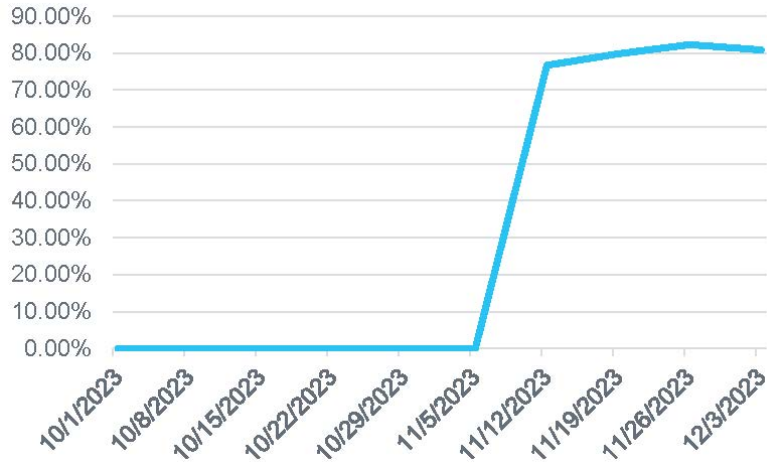
Erwin Health Care Center Overcomes Barriers with Residents Receiving the 2023-2024 Updated COVID-19 Vaccine

- Updated COVID-19 vaccine is provided in a location that provides residents the opportunity to ask questions to knowledgeable staff.



Successes

Percentage of Residents Up To Date based on data from CMS Care Compare (2023-2024 Updated COVID-19 Vaccine)



Number of Residents Receiving Updated COVID-19 Vaccine based on data from CMS Care Compare



Nursing Home Successes

- Knowledgeable admissions department that discuss the benefits of being protected by receiving the 2023-2024 updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- Providing educational material by the admissions department at the time of entry to both residents and family members as it relates to the 2023-2024 updated COVID-19 vaccine.



Key Nursing Home Successes Continued

- Compassionate staff that builds trust with residents and their families.
- Ability to achieve 88% of residents receiving the 2023-2024 updated COVID-19 vaccine since November 2023.



Changes in Leadership

- New CEO brings support to the staff and residents.
- Meeting the residents and their families while spending time learning their personalities and their needs.
- Supports the time and commitment of the staff to continue raising the bar on education to the residents to achieve 88% of their residents currently up to date.
- Supports the science behind vaccines, therefore promotes the 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine.



Birchwood of Beeville, Texas

Rita Mungia, RN, CDP, ACWN
Birchwood Director of Nursing

Caitlin Ferguson, MHA
TMF Quality Improvement Specialist





Rita Mungia, RN, CDP, ACWN

Director of Nursing, Birchwood of Beeville

- 4 years at Birchwood of Beeville (formerly Arden Place).
- 8 years of nursing experience with a background in acute care/med-surg.
- Fun fact: “I started working in the food service and catering before becoming a nurse later in my adult life.”





Caitlin Ferguson, MHA

Quality Improvement Specialist

TMF QIN-QIO

- Masters in Healthcare Administration from the University of Southern California.
- Earned her Nursing Home Administrator license.
- 1+ year on TMF's nursing home quality improvement team assisting facilities with COVID-19 challenges.
- Started in long-term care as a certified nursing assistant and in social services.



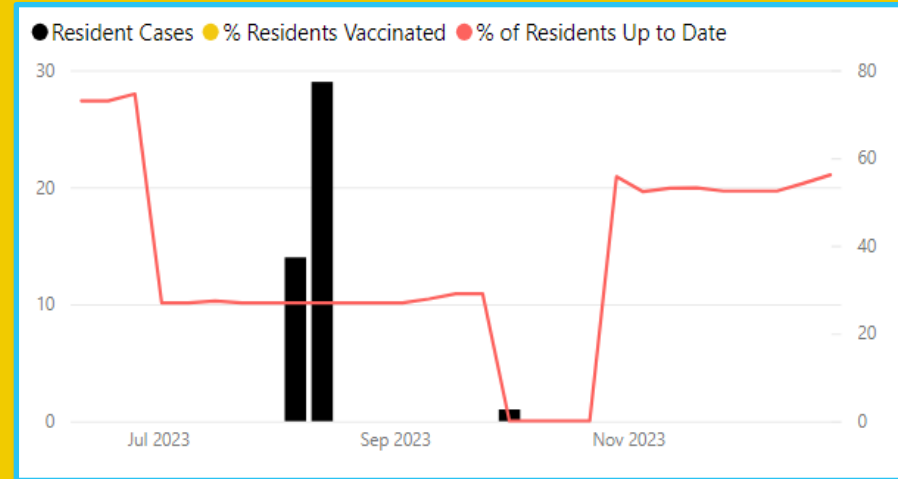
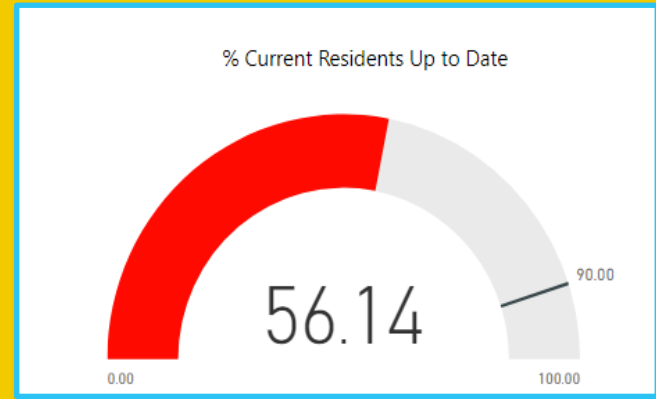
Birchwood of Beeville

- Skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility in rural Texas licensed for 120 beds.
- Average census between 60–65 residents.
- Serves a significant population of long-term residents.
- 2 secured memory care neighborhoods with 1 specialized for females only.



Successful Vaccine Clinic

- When updated vaccine was released, facility was in midst of a COVID-19 outbreak.
- Once the outbreak had resolved, Birchwood held a vaccine clinic Oct. 19, 2023.
- Partnered with local Texas pharmacy HEB to assist with conducting an in-house clinic.
- 34 residents were able to receive the updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine at the clinic.
- Birchwood continues partnership with HEB, as additional residents request to receive the updated COVID-19 vaccine.



Challenges Faced by Birchwood

- Residents have not understood the purpose of additional COVID-19 vaccinations, which increased resistance.
- Those residents who have refused all vaccinations in the past continue to refuse any additional vaccinations.
- Many residents and their family members have been worried about potential side effects from receiving the vaccine.





Overcoming These Challenges

The focus has been on creating lasting relationships with residents and family members. Creating trust has been an integral part to Birchwood's success.

Birchwood provides COVID-19 vaccine education upon admissions.

Staff review vaccine information and ask if residents/family have questions on a quarterly basis.



Continual Improvement to Maintain High Vaccination Rates

- Birchwood has been working on staff retention and filling open positions. DON works on getting all staff members involved and figuring out ways to motivate staff beyond compensation.
- Discussions on Motivational Interviewing and how to utilize these techniques have begun with leadership and staff. The goal is to open up conversations with staff and residents to get to underlying reasons for resistance.
- Many staff members remain resistant to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Birchwood will utilize a communication board to assist with educational efforts.



TMF QIN Education Resources

- [Am I Up to Date?](#)
- [COVID-19 mRNA Vaccines Are Not as New as You Think](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Blitz](#)
- [COVID 19 Vaccine Clinic Checklist](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit](#)
- [How Vaccines Are Working](#)
- [Motivational Interviewing podcasts](#)
- [Resident COVID-19 Vaccination Plan of Action](#)



Discussion



Discussion Questions

- When staff or residents and their families are skeptical of vaccine information on official government websites, what other sources of information have you used to educate them?
- What strategies have been most effective in helping to build trust and compassion among families and gain their acceptance of the COVID-19 vaccine?
- What success have you had with changing residents' minds during conversations about the vaccine? Is there any specific information or talking points that have helped residents be more accepting?
- What is the biggest cause of staff resistance to the vaccine? How are you encouraging them to be more accepting?



