

Addressing barriers to COVID-19 vaccine uptake among staff in long-term care facilities in rural North Central Pennsylvania



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CATEGORY: Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)

The Pennsylvania Department of Health, Long-Term Care Resiliency, Infrastructure, Support and Empowerment (LTC RISE) program provided a COVID-19 vaccination education program at two different rurally located long-term care facilities in the Northcentral region of Pennsylvania. The program has increased vaccination rates at the facilities and served as a starting point for additional quality improvement initiatives aimed at increasing patient care and safety.



The “What”

The Pennsylvania Department of Health, Long-Term Care Resiliency, Infrastructure, Support and Empowerment (LTC RISE) program, which receives funding through the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) cooperative agreement was started in January 2022 to assist long-term care facilities (LTCF). As part of this program, many new initiatives were developed to assist LTCFs prepare and become resilient to future COVID-19 concerns.

The rural location of several LTCFs in the Northcentral region of Pennsylvania appears to have affected the COVID-19 vaccine uptake among facility staff/personnel. Many in rural America view vaccination as a personal choice rather than a societal responsibility, and many people in this subset also believe severity of COVID-19 is exaggerated.

Effective vaccine education needs to be delivered by trusted messengers. The Northcentral LTC RISE team coordinated and collaborated to provide a COVID-19 vaccination education program at two different rurally located LTCFs in the Northcentral region of Pennsylvania. The education was provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Health Long-Term Care Task Force epidemiologists. The epidemiologists served as the “trusted messengers.”



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One of the two Long-Term Care facilities noted a **significant increase** in the number of staff/personnel completing the COVID-19 vaccination series.



The “So What”

One of the two Long-Term Care facilities noted a significant increase in the number of staff/personnel completing the COVID-19 vaccination series (primary series and/or booster doses). The facility noting the increased vaccination number is a small Personal Care Home (PCH) in Danville, PA in Montour County in Northcentral Pennsylvania. The COVID-19 vaccination education program was completed in early September 2022 with a COVID-19 Vaccination/Booster Clinic held two weeks following the education event. Facility administration reported fifty residents and staff completed the primary series or booster dose during the Vaccination/Booster Clinic.

The “Now What”

Following the successful collaboration specific to COVID-19 vaccine education, these two facilities have continued to engage with the Northcentral LTC RISE team in multiple quality improvement initiatives. These initiatives include:

- N95 Mask/Respirator Fit Testing Train-The-Trainer Activity
- Team STEPPS: Teamwork System Designed to Improve Communication for Healthcare Professionals
- Diabetes Education in Long-Term Care
- American Hospital Association Living Learning Network (AHA LLN): Peer-to-Peer Virtual Community/Sharing Platform
- Hand Hygiene Infection Prevention and Control Training: Kinesthetic Activity (“Glo-Germ”)
- CDC Project Firstline Infection Prevention and Control “Escape Room” Activity
- HAPevolve Emergency Preparedness Track Online Education Modules
- Assistance with Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) Certificate/Waiver

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