

Infection Safeguards Go Unenforced

Infections Kill and Injure Nursing Home Residents

[Infection lapses are rampant in nursing homes but punishment is rare](#), declared a Los Angeles Times headline on December 21, 2017. An investigation found that nursing homes routinely ignore basic steps to prevent infections, such as washing hands, isolating contagious patients, and keeping ill nurses and aides from coming to work.

In fact, one to three million nursing home residents annually suffer from infections, and nearly 75 percent of the nation's nursing homes have been cited for infection control violations during the last four years.

The Los Angeles Times article examined the poor care provided to Georgina Morris by a Los Angeles County nursing home. Ms. Morris fell ill to a particularly virulent strain of *Clostridium difficile*, a potentially life-threatening infection. Ms. Morris was hospitalized for 10 days to treat the infection and then underwent multiple re-hospitalizations and medical procedures. An investigation by the Department of Public Health found infection-control lapses throughout the nursing home, as had past inspections.

The Current Administration Is Weakening Oversight

In 2016, in response to such infection-related problems, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) – the part of the federal government responsible for nursing home oversight - [strengthened infection prevention requirements for nursing homes](#). But consistent with the request of nursing home operators, CMS now is weakening those requirements. For 18 months starting November 2017, the administration will not impose any fines or other meaningful penalties related to failure to operate a required antibiotic stewardship program.

This policy alert is part of a series that highlights how the current administration in Washington is weakening protections for nursing home residents, at great risk to their health and well-being. This series is produced by Justice in Aging, The National Consumer Voice for Long-Term Care, The Center for Medicare Advocacy, California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform, and the Long Term Care Community Coalition.