

MDH data: Nursing homes account for half of COVID-19 deaths in Minn.

mprnews.org/story/2020/06/12/new-mdh-data-longterm-care-facilities-account-for-half-covid19-deaths-in-minnesota



St. Therese Senior Services in New Hope in April. The nursing home has had 67 deaths tied to COVID-19, according to new data from the Minnesota Department Health.

Evan Frost | MPR News file

Minnesota health officials say the picture for residents in long-term care facilities is improving, even as they release data under pressure from Republican lawmakers.

According to the Minnesota Department of Health, the number of facilities with new COVID-19 cases has been declining since early May. Five weeks ago, an average of 23 new facilities per day reported cases. Between May 31 and June 6, an average of five new facilities per day reported coronavirus infections.

Further, the Health Department says the average number of cases reported per day in long-term care facilities has been falling. For the week ending May 23, the average number of cases per day in long-term care facilities was about 150. Last week — ending June 6 — it was down to just under 54 per day.

The state Health Department lists only the names of facilities with at least one confirmed case, but not the number of cases in each.

But after intense pressure from state legislators, the Health Department recently released data that shows death rates in different types of long-term care facilities. The data shed light on who is infected with the coronavirus in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, group homes and memory care units. Republican State Sen. Karin Housley, of St. Mary's Point, threatened to use a legislative subpoena to obtain a more detailed report.

Data released June 5 shows that the number of nursing home deaths is about half of the total COVID-19-related Minnesota deaths. Overall, long-term care deaths account for about 80 percent of deaths — those numbers include nursing homes, assisted living facilities, memory care units and group homes, among other things.

The department also provided more detail on which facilities have the highest numbers of deaths and cases.

Approximately one third of all nursing home deaths in Minnesota are from five Twin Cities metro area facilities:

- 67 deaths at St. Therese of New Hope, New Hope
- 57 deaths at North Ridge Health and Rehab, New Hope
- 38 deaths at Southview Acres Health Care Center, West St. Paul
- 29 deaths at Augustana Chapel View Care Center, Hopkins
- 27 deaths at Catholic Eldercare on Main, Minneapolis
- In April [New Hope nursing home sees 'devastating' 47 deaths from COVID-19](#)
- May 8 [Deaths in nursing homes spur officials to increase testing, bolster staff levels](#)

The Health Department's release comes on the heels of newly released data on nursing home deaths across the country. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [data compares nursing home deaths across the country](#).

It shows that Minnesota, on a per-resident basis, is more in line with other states. It ranks 26th in the country in terms of cases and deaths per 1,000 residents.

But the state still has a higher number than neighboring states, Housley said.

"I've been asking for the testing since the beginning of April. Let's get all the staff tested, all of the residents, and let's get the family members tested if they want to go visit. They're already doing it in other states," Housley said, adding that level of testing may allow families to visit over a set period of time.

She's also questioned why the state spent [nearly \\$7 million on a specialized morgue](#) when that money could have been spent on testing.

The state [implemented a plan early last month](#) to boost testing in facilities, get more personal protective equipment to staff and to try to bolster staff numbers.

