



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

NEWS

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Governor Quinn Signs Historic Legislation to Reform Long-Term Care in Illinois

Laws will Improve Safety in Nursing Homes, Increase Staffing and Quality Standards, and Fight Fraud and Abuse

CHICAGO – July 29, 2010. Governor Pat Quinn today signed historic legislation that transforms Illinois' system of care for frail older adults and persons with disabilities. The new law is the product of months of research and deliberation initiated by the Nursing Home Safety Task Force that Governor Quinn appointed in October. The task force was charged with ensuring all Illinois nursing home residents are safe and receive the treatment appropriate for their condition.

"Today begins a new era of nursing home care in Illinois," said Governor Quinn. "Older adults who require 24-hour care deserve a safe, high-quality home, and persons with mental illness must have the care and treatment they need to live full and productive lives in their communities. This law protects Illinois' most vulnerable adults."

Senate Bill 326, sponsored by Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago) and Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago), resulted from strong collaboration between state agencies, members of the Illinois General Assembly, advocates, home and community based service providers, residents and the nursing home profession, led by Governor Quinn's Nursing Home Safety Task Force.

The new law remakes the system of admission to nursing homes, ensuring that only those in need of 24-hour skilled care are admitted. The law also strengthens the screening process to prevent residents with violent criminal histories from being placed with vulnerable, older adults.

The law sets higher nursing home quality and staffing requirements, raises penalties for violations, and increases inspections and monitoring. The new law also requires nursing homes to help all residents achieve their highest level of functioning and prepare to transition to more independent, community-based living.

Governor Quinn also signed Senate Bill 2863, sponsored by Sen. Jacqueline Collins (D-Chicago) and Rep. Harry Osterman (D-Chicago), which will reduce fraud and abuse in nursing homes. An initiative of the Office of the Attorney General, the law requires prompt reporting of fraud, abuse and neglect in nursing homes, broadens the definition of criminal neglect, and requires greater disclosure by nursing home owners.

"We have to do everything we can to protect vulnerable nursing home residents and make sure they are safe," said Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan. "These bills significantly strengthen the process for protecting nursing home residents from those who may pose a threat. And they provide us with critical tools needed to target nursing home fraud."

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Governor Quinn formed the Nursing Home Safety Task Force in October 2009, to respond to concerns for the safety of nursing home residents by thoroughly examining current regulatory policies and coordination among state agencies, and identifying necessary changes in legislation, regulation and policy. The task force held public meetings, heard testimony from more than 50 advocates, academic experts, nursing home residents and their families, and gathered hundreds of public comments through an interactive Web site, www.nursinghomesafety.illinois.gov.

The task force released its final report in February that included 38 recommendations, which served as a blueprint for this reform legislation. State agencies, nursing homes and advocates continue to collaborate to develop new nursing home rates and assessments, as called for in the legislation.

Both laws go into effect immediately.

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