



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 12, 2020

Wolf Administration: Reauthorizing Title 32 Allows Pennsylvania National Guard to Continue Assisting Long-Term Care Facilities Affected by COVID-19 without Financial Burden on the State

Harrisburg, PA – The Wolf Administration, with the support of U.S. Sen. Bob Casey and U.S. Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, today urged the federal government to reauthorize Title 32 to allow Pennsylvania National Guard members to carry out missions that assist long-term care facilities affected by COVID-19 in Pennsylvania.

“The Pennsylvania National Guard has been instrumental in our Nation’s response to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, including supporting community-based testing sites, distributing millions of meals to Pennsylvanians in need and aiding our frontline health workers who provide care to COVID-19 patients in long-term care facilities,” said U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA). “I urge the Trump Administration to renew the federal Title 32 authorization for the Pennsylvania National Guard to streamline pay and benefits for National Guard members and their families. As the nation expects spikes in COVID-19 cases in the coming months, this renewal is much needed to ensure the National Guard is able to support efforts to keep our citizens safe and to maintain National Guard operations without additional burden to states and territories.”

Without federal authorization, Pennsylvania would have to consider placing the Pennsylvania National Guard on State Active Duty, which the state would be financially responsible for. Also, federal authorization provides more protection for members of the Pennsylvania National Guard for healthcare and benefits.

"Our PA National Guard has been on the frontlines of this pandemic," said Houlahan. "What is abundantly clear is that this pandemic is not yet over. Cases are spiking across the country, and we will need the Guard as we navigate the next phase of this pandemic. That's why I have joined a bipartisan coalition urging the Trump Administration to renew Title 32 authorization and to do so in a way that does not financially burden the individual states. This renewal cannot wait. It will help shore up our statewide protections against this virus through the vital operations run by the Guard as well as streamline the payment process for these brave Pennsylvanians."

“The assistance of the Pennsylvania National Guard has been essential in ensuring we are caring for residents in long-term care facilities during this pandemic,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “As we see cases increasing across the state, we know

that cases in long-term care facilities are a direct reflection of the community. The Pennsylvania National Guard is a vital resource in assisting these facilities when there are staffing needs.”

Throughout the pandemic, the Wolf Administration has been working diligently to assist long-term care facilities with any needs they have. This work is particularly important as we see an increase in cases. A team of staff is working to assess where outbreaks are occurring and providing resources. These resources may include infection control expertise, connection to testing resources, and working to assist stakeholders with questions.

One of the primary resources the administration can offer is support from the Pennsylvania National Guard. The Pa. National Guard can provide staffing support to assist in patient care, as well as providing support services such as preparing meals, cleaning, etc. This work has been invaluable to assist where there are shortages due to COVID-19 to ensure residents are receiving the care they need and deserve. Members of the Pennsylvania National Guard has served the equivalent of 7,351 days as part of the COVID-19 response.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has truly emphasized the National Guard's vast array of capabilities as well as our devotion to our commonwealth and communities,” said Albert R. Fogle, Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine specializing in Geriatric Medicine and a lieutenant colonel in the PA National Guard. “As the second largest Guard in the nation, we have been able to apply our civilian skill sets and military occupational specialties to assist long-term care facilities throughout the pandemic. Working together with our state partners and citizens is how we will get through these times of uncertainty. We are all in this together.”

In September 2020, Mountain View Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Northumberland County welcomed the support from Geisinger, the region’s Regional Response Health Collaboration Program (RRHCP), the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and the National Guard.

“Not only did the National Guard staff support the nursing staff at Mountain View, they also assisted with daily tasks that needed to be completed. No matter how big or small the tasks for our residents, from passing trays, providing ice and water and conducting face time visits, the National Guard was there supporting our staff and meeting the needs our of residents and staff.” Kelli Martz, Nursing Home Administrator stated.

The National Guard was phenomenal in working collaboratively with the dedicated staff at Mountain View. This additional support provided our staff to keep their focus on resident care. The health and safety of our residents and staff, prior to, through out and continuing through this pandemic, continue to be our number one priority. The staff at Mountain View would like to acknowledge and thank these individuals for their commitment and compassion displayed throughout the time they were at the facility.

The Wolf Administration has taken a three-pillar approach to protecting the vulnerable residents living in nursing homes and other long-term living settings:

- Ensuring resident safety through testing, education and resources;
- Preventing and mitigating outbreaks; and
- Working in partnership with state agencies, local health departments and long-term care facility operators.

The Wolf Administration has provided long-term care facilities with the resources and expertise in order to prevent or control existing outbreaks. This include:

- Providing direct support through Regional Response Health Collaborative Programs; Pennsylvania Department of Health's (DOH's) Healthcare Acquired Infections (HAI) team; DOH infection control contractor ECRI; the Patient Safety Authority; General Health Resources; and the Pennsylvania National Guard;
- Providing personal protective equipment (PPE) regularly to facility operators, as well as education and training on how to safely put it on and take it off;
- The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) coordinates closely with the DOH as they evaluate various types of support that may be needed at facilities across the commonwealth. Once specific needs are identified, PEMA works with agencies, such as the Pennsylvania National Guard, to provide the support needed as quickly as possible.
- Regularly inspecting facilities and responding to every complaint filed with DOH;
- Creating rapid response strike teams using the state's staffing contract with nurses to staff the facilities in need;
- Providing virtual mental health services to facilities through the Department of Human Services' medical reserve corps;
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention teams provided on-site assistance for 13 long-term care facilities using their infection prevention and control expertise and training of U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) teams
- Sharing information through bulletin boards, nursing home associations, and our normal channels of communication such as [Health Alert Network](#) messages; and
- Prioritizing nursing homes and long-term care facilities to receive PPE, and for testing among symptomatic individuals.

For the latest information for individuals, families, businesses and schools, visit “Responding to COVID-19” on [pa.gov](https://www.pa.gov).

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out, you are required to wear a mask when in a business or where it is difficult to maintain proper social distancing.
- Download the COVID Alert PA app and make your phone part of the fight. The free app can be found in the [Google Play Store](#) and the [Apple App Store](#) by searching for “covid alert pa.”

Updated Coronavirus Links: Press Releases, State Lab Photos, Graphics

- [Daily COVID-19 Report](#)
- [Press releases regarding coronavirus](#)
- [Latest information on the coronavirus](#)
- [Photos of the state’s lab in Exton](#) (for download and use)
- [Coronavirus and preparedness graphics](#) (located at the bottom of the page)

[Community preparedness and procedures materials](#)