**MassHealth Investment to Support Signing Bonuses for Nursing Facility Staff**

 ***Updated as of May 15, 2020***

**Overview and Objectives**

* Massachusetts is acting to address staffing shortages that nursing facilities are experiencing due to COVID-19
* Through the COVID-19 Long Term Care Facility Staffing Team [portal](https://covid19ltc.umassmed.edu/), nursing facilities can request staffing needs and potential staff can apply for jobs. The portal matches supply and demand, filling the need in high priority locations first.
* As of 5/14/2020, over 450 unique facilities have requested over 15,000 health care personnel through the portal, but only 1,900 applicants have registered to meet this demand.
* For all existing staff at nursing facilities, MassHealth is providing workforce support through increased payments to nursing facilities (10% increase for all nursing facilities across the state as part of the [COVID-19 Health Care Provider Financial Relief Package](https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-health-care-provider-financial-relief-package/download), a 15% increase for facilities with a [Dedicated COVID-19 Isolation Space](https://www.mass.gov/doc/masshealth-nursing-facility-investment-to-support-dedicated-covid-19-isolation-spaces-0/download), and an up to 50% additional increase to support [infection control and accountability measures](https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-nursing-facility-accountability-and-support-0/download)). It is the expectation of MassHealth that facilities will use these dollars to retain and provide additional compensation to existing staff.

**Financing Structure**

* MassHealth will fund **signing bonuses of $500 for completing 2 weeks of work or $1,000 for one month** for nursing facilities to pay to all staff who sign up or register through the portal for a new job.
* MassHealth will make supplemental payments to nursing facilities for the expense they incur.
* The estimated investment is over $1 million.
* Payments are subject to EOHHS audit of compliance with criteria stated below.

**Qualifying Criteria**

* Nursing facilities must hire through or have their hires register through the COVID-19 Long Term Care Facility Staffing Team [portal](https://covid19ltc.umassmed.edu/).
	+ MassHealth is funding signing bonuses through the portal because the portal matches supply and demand, filling the need in high priority locations first.
	+ In addition, the portal provides MassHealth greater transparency into hiring.
	+ Staff hired through the portal since its launch on 4/8 are retroactively eligible
* Eligible staffing types include: RN, LPN, CNA/Patient Care Tech, Resident Care Assistant (RCA), OT, OTA, PT, PTA, LICSW, activities staff.
* Employment status can be as a W-2 employee or independent contractor, provided that the contract is directly between the facility and the staff person, not through a temporary staffing agency.
* The nursing facility must submit documentation 30 days after the employee’s start date to MassHealth to verify the following:
	+ The bonus was paid to the new employee
	+ The employee worked for at least 64 hours at the facility within 15 days of the employee’s start date to qualify for the $500 bonus or 128 hours at the facility within 30 days of the employee’s start date for the $1,000 bonus
* Staff must be hired by **June 12** to be eligible.

**Verification Process**

* [Qualifying criteria](https://www.mass.gov/doc/nursing-facility-bulletin-147-signing-bonuses-for-nursing-facility-staff-0/download) will be posted on the portal to ensure applicants are aware of bonus requirements
* Facilities will be eligible for the [supplemental payment](https://www.mass.gov/doc/administrative-bulletin-20-48-101-cmr-20600-standard-payments-to-nursing-facilities-0/download) by submitting the following documentation to MassHealth:
	+ List of names of eligible employees
	+ Attestation document verifying criteria listed above
* Hired staff who believe they were eligible but did not receive a bonus can notify EOHHS using the email addresses below. An email will be added to the [portal](https://covid19ltc.umassmed.edu/)to serve as a point of contact.
* Staff who would otherwise be eligible for the signing bonus based on the qualifying criteria, but who become COVID-19 positive during the 15 day or 30 day duration and therefore cannot meet the 64 or 128 hour eligibility criterion will still be eligible for the signing bonus.

**Questions**

* For applicants or nursing facilities who have questions on this policy, please email EOHHS at Amar.Parikh@MassMail.State.MA.US and Meera.Ramamoorthy@MassMail.State.MA.US.