

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](#), 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](#), a 15% increase for facilities with a [Dedicated COVID-19 Isolation Space](#), and an up to 50% additional increase to support [infection control and accountability measures](#)). 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](#).
 - 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](#) will be posted on the portal to ensure applicants are aware of bonus requirements
- Facilities will be eligible for the [supplemental payment](#) 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](#) 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.