



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Commission on Seniors

Recommendation Number: (20201112-03B): Transparency of Reporting COVID-19 in Nursing Homes and Long-Term Care Facilities

WHEREAS, more than 40 percent of all COVID-19 deaths in Texas are of residents and staff of nursing homes and long-term care facilities; and

WHEREAS, on May 7 the Austin City Council passed Resolution 20200507-59 to combat the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes and long-term care facilities, including the testing, deployment of “Strike Teams” to facilities with clusters and ensuring all facilities have sufficient PPE and testing equipment; and

WHEREAS, despite these efforts Austin Public Health Interim Health Authority Dr. Mark Escott stated on July 14: “Our nursing home defenses have been penetrated, and we are seeing numbers like we were seeing early on in this outbreak,” he said. “This provides us evidence that we have to do better at reducing the community transmission, and two — we have to have additional resources to do more aggressive testing and containment.” In addition, KXAN reports that Texas leads the nation with the most nursing homes reporting staffing shortages in each key metric tracked by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; and

WHEREAS, according to AARP Texas State Director Tina Tran: AARP has been collecting personal accounts from people across the country who have loved ones in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. We’ve heard from family members who have been kept in the dark about the well-being and care of their loved one. Others have been deeply concerned by the shortage of staffing and adequate personal protective equipment. And tragically, some have lost loved ones who were never even tested for COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Austin-Travis County COVID-19 website does limited reporting on resident and staff COVID cases and deaths in nursing homes and long term care facilities, includes these cases under the heading “clusters” rather than on the Dashboard, and does not identify

facilities by name. Dr. Escott has stated that there is a legal opinion preventing the city from identifying each facility, despite HHSC and CMS doing so; and

WHEREAS, both the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) (<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/health/coronavirus-covid-19>) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (<https://data.cms.gov/stories/s/COVID-19-Nursing-Home-Data/bkwz-xpvg/>) identify the names of nursing homes and long term care facilities in their reporting of COVID-19 data; and

WHEREAS, KXAN uses Texas HHSC data to identify Austin-area nursing homes and long-term care facilities with COVID outbreaks. <https://www.kxan.com/investigations/kxan-continues-tracking-and-mapping-covid-19-in-central-texas-senior-facilities/>; and

WHEREAS, HHSC updates to emergency rules will now allow outdoor visitation at nursing facilities and both outdoor visitation and indoor visitation via plexiglass, and specific identification of facilities would promote adherence to safe visitation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that in order to improve transparency of data collected on nursing homes, nursing homes, assisted living facilities and skilled care facilities the Commission on Seniors recommends the Austin City Council direct the City Manager to do the following:

- Move data on these facilities out of the heading “clusters” to a stand-alone heading that more clearly identifies the data (eg. “Senior Living Facilities” or “Nursing Homes and other Facilities”)
- Include trends at each facility
- Identify each facility by name
- Bi-weekly reports that include:
 - Facilities where a “strike team” was deployed and the services provided by the strike team
 - Facilities which refused a strike team
 - Testing and hospitalization protocol at each facility
 - Requests for PPE

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in order to mitigate future outbreaks of COVID-19 in facilities serving older adults, Austin Public Health should institute regular weekly testing of staff at nursing homes, assisted living facilities and skilled care facilities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager should report on these efforts in 30 days.

Date of Approval: August 12, 2020

Record of the vote: Unanimous (For: Briesemeister, Varteressian, Angel, Bordie, Cagle, Garcia-Pittman, Grampp, Hauser, Jackson, Kareithi, Lugo, Temperley, Van Sickle, Spain. Absent: Nicola)

Attest:  .

Janee Briesemeister, Chair