



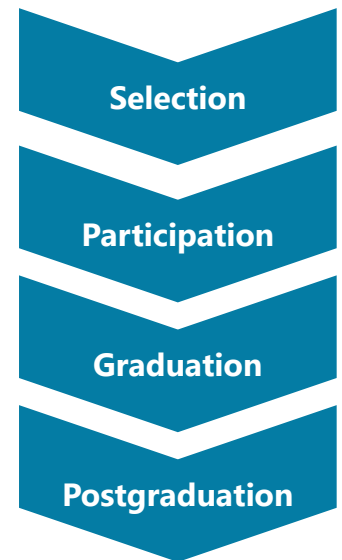
Special Focus Facility Program Nursing Homes, 2013–2022

Implemented by the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#) (CMS), the Special Focus Facility (SFF) program is the Nation’s flagship program to facilitate quality improvements in the poorest-performing nursing homes through increased oversight. This data snapshot provides a detailed look at the nursing homes that participated in the SFF program from 2013 through 2022 and how nursing homes move through the phases of the SFF program.


Required by the Social Security Act and established by CMS, the SFF program targets a small number of facilities: Just 88 nursing homes participate at any one time, with varied required participation across States.^{1, 2} Throughout the year, as nursing homes leave the program, others enter. State survey agencies, together with CMS, select nursing homes for the SFF program and conduct comprehensive, onsite surveys of SFFs every 6 months, twice as often as for other nursing homes. To graduate, SFFs cannot receive a serious deficiency on two consecutive standard surveys or on any complaint surveys. CMS aims to have all SFFs graduate within 2 years and may terminate SFFs from participating in Medicare or Medicaid if they fail to improve. In October 2022, CMS updated the SFF program with the goals of reducing time in the program and promoting sustained improvements after graduating.³


Our companion report “CMS’s Special Focus Facility Program for Nursing Homes Has Not Yielded Lasting Improvements” (OEI-01-23-00050) shows that the SFF program falls short: Most SFFs did not sustain improvements made in the program. Please see the report for full analysis and recommendations to CMS.


Snapshot Outline: SFF Program Phases



SFF Program Key Components:

 Surveys every 6 months

 Graduation requirements

 Progressive enforcement

 Postgraduation monitoring