



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

For Immediate Distribution | May 27, 2020 | (512) 463-1826

Governor Abbott, HHSC Announce \$3.6 Million To Connect Nursing Facility Residents And Families

AUSTIN- Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) today announced \$3.6 million in funding for nursing facilities to purchase tablets, webcams, and headphones to connect residents with their loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic. Texas is encouraging nursing facility providers to submit applications to HHSC to receive up to \$3,000 in federal funding per facility for purchasing communication technology devices.

"This program will help Texans in nursing homes stay connected to their loved ones while protecting the health and safety of our most vulnerable populations," said Governor Abbott. "As we continue to respond to COVID-19 and mitigate the spread of this virus, we are committed to developing effective strategies that protect Texans while keeping them connected."

"Staying connected to families and friends is vitally important to Texans who live in nursing facilities during this unprecedented situation," said David Kostroun, deputy executive commissioner for HHSC's Regulatory Services Division. "We want facilities to know this option can help connect residents to their loved ones virtually, while still protecting everyone's health and safety."

HHSC is allocating Civil Money Penalty (CMP) funds for this project. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) imposes CMPs against Medicare- or Medicaid-certified nursing facilities found out of compliance with federal requirements. CMP funds can be used for projects and activities that benefit nursing facility residents by improving their quality of care or quality of life.

Any Texas nursing facility can apply for this funding. Purchased devices must be cleaned and disinfected between every use by a resident. CMS has established guidelines for facilities on proper use and requirements:

<https://link.edgepilot.com/s/bc5837b4/9JdS3mOBckGnPhZPeEqvIw?u=https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/provider-portals/long-term-care-providers/nursing-facilities/civil->

[money-penalty-funds-nf-projects](#)

HHSC also has encouraged facilities to implement a communication plan to help families, residents, and others stay informed and connected, noting they are legally obligated to maintain privacy and HIPAA protections.

HHSC continues to work closely with long-term care providers statewide and has issued multiple guidance letters, emergency rules and alerts, and rule waivers to give them the flexibility and information they need to protect Texans from COVID-19. Guidance provided by HHSC is posted [here](#), and HHSC also regularly updates its FAQs for [nursing facilities](#). Texas residents can dial 2-1-1 to learn about programs and services.

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