

CSAC Entry: Skilled Nursing Facility Outreach and Support Team (SO+S)

Overview - The Countywide Multi-Department Skilled Nursing Facility Outreach and Support Team (SO+S) offers expert training for staff working with patients who are the most vulnerable to COVID-19.

Challenge - Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) residents are among the highest risk for COVID-19 complications due to the congregate living setting, average age, and common comorbidities. In San Bernardino County, the largest county geographically in the contiguous United States, there are close to 200 Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF), Congregate Living Facilities, and Intermediate Care facilities. Arrowhead Regional Medical Center (ARMC) took the lead along with the San Bernardino County Public Health Department and the Department of Behavioral Health to put together a highly-skilled support team of health care professionals to provide facilities with personal protective equipment (PPE); training on donning and doffing of PPE; information on COVID-19 prevention; information on resource requests, and supply chain and operational needs.

Solution - The innovative steps taken by the County's (SO+S) Task Force included authoring a comprehensive COVID-19 handbook that was delivered to the frontline staff at each of the Skilled Nursing Facilities. The handbook starts with a basic definition of COVID-19, its symptoms, contagiousness, and prevention guidelines. Included in the handbook are step-by-step handwashing instructions, PPE Donning and Doffing instructions, visitation guidance, staffing instructions, cleaning, and sanitizing instructions, as well as self-care guidance and a list of resources. In addition to the handbook, the (SO+S) Task Force conducted in-person visits to the SNFs to provide hands-on training for staff on COVID-19 prevention at work including, monitoring symptoms, handwashing, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), patient's clothes and belongings, patient's room, food service, and contractors and outside vendors. The (SO+S) Team also assists staff at the SNFs with COVID-19 prevention at home including how to safely return home, how to stay in place, maintain your space, cover your face, monitor symptoms, and how to safely keep your home safe from infection. The team also assists with what to do if a patient is diagnosed with COVID-19. Additional steps included the development of a streamlined easy-to-read SNF brochure describing the (SO+S) Task Force services and providing a direct phone number to schedule site visits and to answer urgent PPE supply needs. Additional deliverables for the SNFs include a Frequently Asked Questions document, Staff Resources list for Nursing and Medical Support staff, an informational flyer for posting at each SNF and social media communications.

Innovation - This SOS Program is innovative in the fact that it is San Bernardino County Department of Public Health partnership with Arrowhead Regional Medical Center (ARMC) and the Department

of Behavioral Health and offers expertise and training for staff working with patients who are most vulnerable to COVID-19. The Skilled Nursing Facilities in San Bernardino County were not alone during COVID-19. They had the support of the (SO+S) Task Force that did everything from hands-on staff training, calling in the National Guard to bolster SNF staffing, staying late into the night or early mornings to make sure all was handled at the SNFs, as well as providing emotional support for some staff who were fearful or exhausted. The SO+S team also developed an innovative approach to staffing called the Quick Response Force, a rapid-deployed group of health care providers who could fill staffing gaps until reinforcements arrived.

Results - The results of the formation of the collaborative SO+S Task Force during the COVID-19 pandemic include anecdotal observations of fewer deaths in nursing homes in the County of San Bernardino, rapid management of staffing and PPE supply issues and constant and consistent support and training from acute-care trained health care providers. To provide staffing certainty, especially going into the weekends when call-offs, illness and other issues could affect staffing, the SO+S team recruited and stood up a Quick Response Force (QRF) staffing team. This QRF force was available 24/7 seven days a week and often provided staffing while facilities were waiting for their own staff to return from leave or while waiting for State staffing resources.

Replicability - The SO+S Task Force program along with the QRF staffing matrix can be replicated and used as a best practice by other California Counties. The SO+S team stands ready to assist other counties with training and best practices for Skilled Nursing Facilities and other congregate living situations. The County of San Bernardino's SO+S Task Force is an example for other counties to use that can potentially save many lives in the nursing home and congregate living situations. The establishment of the SO+S Task Force did much to allay the fears of nursing home staff members. In addition, the regular SO+S team on-site check-ins at nursing homes ensured a calm and supportive care environment.

Project or Program Contact

Justine Rodriguez
Director of Marketing and Public Relations
Arrowhead Regional Medical Center
400 North Pepper Avenue
Colton, CA 92324
(909) 580-3143
rodrigjust@armc.sbcounty.gov

Optional Submission – graphic design <https://www.arrowheadregional.org/covid-19-updates/>