



Office of the State Comptroller | 2020

The State of Israel Response to the COVID-19 Crisis
Special Interim Report

Care for Senior Citizens in Residential Care Facilities During the COVID-19 Crisis

The final report will be published in 2021

Abstract

KEY FIGURES

71,100

Number of senior citizens living in residential care according to latest figures for April 2020

619

Number of senior citizens living in residential care who died from COVID-19 according to latest figures for 3.10.20

36%

Senior citizens living in residential care who died from COVID-19 as a percentage of all COVID-19 deaths according to latest figures for 3.10.20

7,432

Average number of COVID-19 tests carried out in residential care facilities each day from the start of August 2020

NIS 19.2m

Cost of protective equipment distributed to residential care facilities up to August 2020

Key Findings

- ❖ **Number of care home residents who died from COVID-19:** The latest figures for 3.10.20 submitted to the State Comptroller's Office by "Parents' Shield"¹ show that from 15.3.20 to that date, 619 of 1,710 total COVID-19 deaths were senior citizens living in residential care (residents). This represents 36% of the deceased, although they constitute less than 1% of the population. The proportion of residents among COVID-19 deaths is almost six times higher than their share in the senior citizen population, and more than 40 times their share in the general population.
- ❖ **Testing to find COVID-19 carriers in care homes:** The fact that the head of Parents' Shield oversaw weekly testing of care home staff is commended. However according to the latest figures for mid-August 2020, Parents' Shield does not ensure that all care home staff who have contact with residents are tested, and it does not have a complete picture of the situation.

1 A Governing headquarters that deals with the subject of COVID-19 in all institutions for senior citizens.

- ❖ **Response to senior citizens with COVID-19 in care homes:** According to figures from 16.8.20, there were significant gaps in achieving the target of beds for COVID-19 patients in geriatric hospitals: The number of available beds were 38%-44% of the target (440 beds out of a target of 1,000 or 1,150). No date had been set for achieving the target of about 1,000 beds available for care home residents with COVID-19. In addition there were outstanding issues that could make it difficult to achieve the target.
- ❖ **Optimal utilization of COVID-19 wards in geriatric hospitals:** On each of the days between 10.8.20 and 24.8.20, 45 senior citizens on average were hospitalized in general hospitals, although in the assessment of the medical staff, they could be transferred to geriatric hospitals. If the patients had been transferred to the COVID-19 wards in geriatric hospitals, this would have released beds in the general hospitals for COVID-19 patients from the general population.

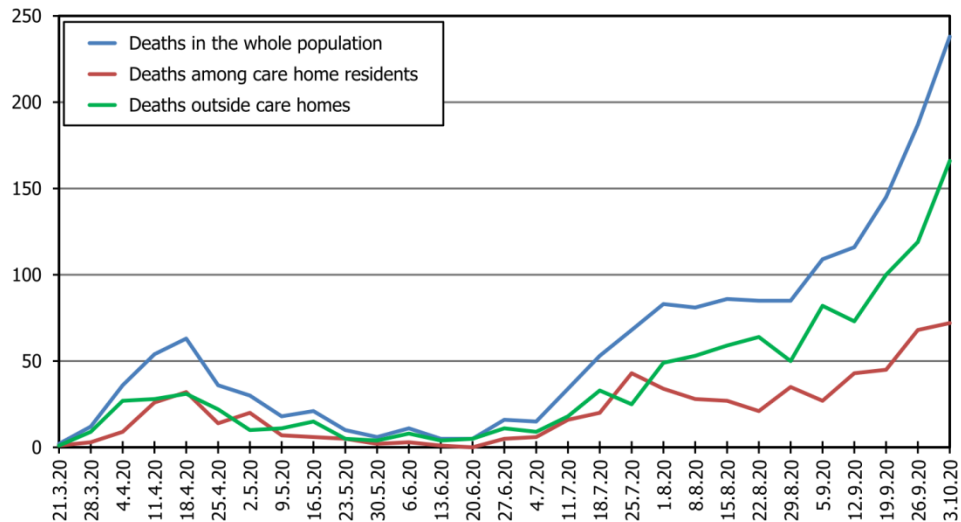
Key Recommendations

- ❖ **Tests to find COVID-19 carriers in care homes:** In view of the importance that can be attributed to testing to avoid the spread of infection among care home residents, the Ministry of Health should track the correlation between the number of COVID-19 tests allocated for care home staff and residents and the infection and mortality rates of the residents in residential care. It should also consider the option of increasing the number of tests done over the weekend, when the number of tests done on the general population is 50% less than on other days, according to the latest figures from August 2020. Parents' Shield should also determine priority for testing in care homes based on the risk level to residents, including the classification of the caregivers' town in the "traffic light" model², and make sure that the tests are indeed carried out. The Ministry of Health should also examine the option of defining special guidelines for care home staff; the Ministry should encourage them to download the Shield 2 app³, and explain to them the importance of the app which can help to break the chain of infection, and thus protect residents.
- ❖ **Responses to COVID-19-positive senior citizens in care homes:** The Ministry of Health should make a comprehensive assessment of the range of options for isolating care home residents, while ensuring the proper conditions for providing the care they need. It should consider various scenarios, including the possibility of a high incidence of flu and COVID-19 this winter.
- ❖ **Optimal utilization of COVID-19 wards in geriatric hospitals:** The Ministry of Health should investigate whether there are obstacles preventing the transfer of senior citizens with COVID-19 from general hospitals to the COVID-19 wards of geriatric hospitals. It should also act to eliminate any barriers it identifies, and to optimally utilize available resources.

² The traffic light model designates towns into three classifications based on the COVID-19 infection rate.

³ The Shield 2 application helps the user to know if he has been exposed to a verified COVID-19 patient.

Number of residents of care homes who died from COVID-19 compared to the number of deaths in the rest of the population and total deaths, by week, from 15.3.20 to 3.10.20



Figures received from "Parents' Shield", processed by the State Comptroller's Office

