Governor Abbott, HHSC Announce Emergency Rule to Increase Supply of Direct Care Providers in Nursing Facilities

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Governor Greg Abbott today announced that the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has adopted an emergency rule to temporarily allow more nurse aides to serve residents in long-term care facilities during the COVID-19 response.

The emergency rule temporarily allows nursing facilities to hire people to provide nurse aide services without having to complete a full certification program in their first four months of employment. This action will expand the eligible pool of direct care workers and help long-term care providers who may face critical staffing shortages.

"As Texas continues to respond to COVID-19, we are working to make sure our long-term care facilities have adequate staff to care for Texans residing in these facilities," said Governor Abbott. "This emergency rule will increase the availability of nurse aides in the workforce and ensure residents of long-term care facilities have the care and support they need."

"It is critical that facilities have sufficient front-line staff, as these aides provide hands-on care to medically fragile residents around the clock," said David Kostroun, the Deputy Executive Commissioner for HHSC's Regulatory Services division. "Governor Abbott's action assists the providers we regulate to address the many challenges posed by COVID-19."

Nursing facilities are responsible for ensuring nurse aides are competent in performing assigned tasks, such as taking vital signs or providing personal care. This can be done by having a licensed nurse directly observe a nurse aide while they perform these tasks.

The temporary suspension of nurse aide training requirements provides needed regulatory flexibility to address possible staffing shortages experienced during the COVID-19 response.

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