

STATE AUDITOR DOUG HOFFER

Press Release

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Release Date: 22 October 2024

Follow Up to Audit of Vermont's Efforts to Protect Long-Term Care Home Residents Finds Major Improvements

Earlier Audit Found Substantial Noncompliance with Regulations, and that Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living Had Not Been Performing Annual Inspections Required By Law

MONTPELIER, VT – State Auditor Doug Hoffer released a follow up report today of the audit his office completed in 2023 which examined the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living's performance inspecting long-term care homes housing vulnerable older Vermonters. That audit found that across seven years DAIL, as the department is called, was not performing annual facility inspections as required by law, did not have effective systems in place to ensure safety violations would be fixed, and rarely used enforcement tools to address the problems they found.

"Put simply," Hoffer said, "our audit found that DAIL's efforts to ensure Vermonters living in assisted living and residential care facilities are safe were not good enough. As someone who has had family members in long term care facilities, I know Vermonters count on the State to make sure our peace of mind about their safety is well-placed."

Vermont has three kinds of long-term care homes – nursing homes, assisted living residences, and residential care homes. Nursing homes are subject to federal oversight, while assisted living and residential care facilities are only subject to state regulation. The audit focused on the latter two types of facilities.

Notable improvements found in the follow up report include:

- DAIL has begun to inspect each facility annually. The audit had found that facilities were not being inspected annually as required by law, and some went years without inspection.
- DAIL has implemented a system to inspect all new facilities once residents move in. Previously, DAIL performed a walk-through *prior* to a facility's opening date, but a complete assessment cannot be properly done until the facility is occupied and staff are in place.
- DAIL closed all past unfinished inspection reports and statements of deficiencies, some of which were years old, by reinspecting the facilities and

issuing new reports. These reports are a key tool to hold facility management accountable for the well-being of the vulnerable Vermonters they house.

- DAIL has begun to send a regular communication to the facilities they oversee identifying the most frequently encountered deficiencies during their recent inspection visits. This could help address systemic problems more proactively in order to keep residents across Vermont safe.

Not all recommendations have been implemented yet. For example, DAIL has not begun to post records of enforcement actions on their website. Vermonters deserve this information, presented simply and transparently, prior to placing loved ones in facilities that may have a history of failing to correct the problems DAIL uncovers.

Hoffer added: “While DAIL has more work to do, I am very pleased that they’ve made positive strides. I’m especially glad that they are now performing annual site inspections. Those are key to staying on top of the condition of facilities, and to making sure that safety issues don’t go undetected for long periods of time.

“Protecting the most vulnerable Vermonters is one of our government’s most sacred duties. My audit team did a great job identifying opportunities for DAIL to perform better, and credit to DAIL for stepping up.”

A copy of the original audit can be found [here](#), and the follow up report can be found [here](#).