

Q: How many Long Term Care Facilities are operating in Bridgewater Township?

A: According to the [New Jersey Department of Health](#) website, there are 10 long-term care facilities in Bridgewater Township. These 10 facilities account for more than a quarter of all such facilities in Somerset County.

Q: Is that amount higher than average in New Jersey?

A: Absolutely. Bridgewater's population is approximately 44,000. Of the 10 New Jersey towns nearest our population level only one—West Orange, which has 12—has more such facilities than we do. By way of comparison, West Orange has lost 156 residents to COVID-19, while Bridgewater has lost 57.

The other 9 towns contain far fewer facilities than we do; in fact, only one other town in that range has more than 4, while two don't have any at all. The rest have between 1 and 3.

Q: How much of Bridgewater's COVID-19 mortality rate is attributable to these facilities?

A: Of the 57 Bridgewater residents who have passed away from COVID-19, 78% of them resided in or were connected to these facilities. Bridgewater health officials count only confirmed deaths due to COVID—that is, deaths of those who are empirically confirmed to have had the virus.

According to Bridgewater Health Officer Kevin Sumner, "as you can see from the data we publish—and as sadly proven true in every country throughout the world—the elderly are especially vulnerable to this disease, especially when living in close quarters. That fact is as tragic as it inescapable, based on the data I have available to me."

Q: What is Bridgewater's government doing to help and oversee these facilities?

A: The Division of Aging of the New Jersey Department of Health is the primary regulatory and supervisory authority for these facilities. The State Health Commissioner has directed [all](#) long-term care facilities in the State of New Jersey to conduct universal testing, to include both residents and staff. While Bridgewater government and health officials applaud this directive, we do not have access to testing resources to assist these facilities in executing it. Still, we do have a role to play.

Bridgewater health officials regularly communicate with the leadership of each of these facilities within our town, in order to make sure they have the assistance they need and to request patient information from them as we move forward. We stand by ready to provide any assistance we can should they request it. While we investigate reports of concerns at these facilities if necessary—and take appropriate action—we have received no such reports at this time.

Q: Someone I care for is in one of these facilities. What can I do?

A: While it may be very upsetting and painful, the very best thing you can do right now is help these facilities uphold their quarantine procedures by respecting the rules and regulations for entry they have in place. If you find yourself unable to communicate with the facility or you have another concern, you may always contact us at coronavirus@BridgewaterNJ.gov for help.

Q: How can we keep senior citizens outside of these facilities safe?

A: The Centers for Disease Control has published [this page](#) to assist seniors and other high-risk populations during the pandemic. Tiffany Neal, Bridgewater's Health Educator, offers this advice to seniors: "Stay home as much as possible. Take advantage of every grocery delivery and other services to avoid going out into the community. This will help keep you safe by limiting your contact with other people who may be contagious without even realizing it."