Transfer of Hospital Patients to PALTC Setting

**Issue:**
Several states (with more anticipated) have unilaterally required or attempted to require their nursing homes to accept COVID-19 positive or suspected patients, without support for additional PPE or testing of these patients.

It is essential to consider the health, welfare and safety of frail individuals residing in our nation’s post-acute and long-term care (PALTC) facilities, where we know the attack rate and case-fatality rates (CFR) from COVID-19 are staggering. The preliminary results from Kirkland in Washington state show a hospitalization rate of 57% for PALTC residents and CFR rates of 36% and 7% for PALTC residents and visitors respectively. And these are only preliminary results.

Unsafe transfers will increase the risk of transmission in PALTC facilities, which will ultimately only serve to increase the return flow back to hospitals, overwhelming capacity, endangering more healthcare personnel, and escalating the burden on hospitals.

Nursing home capacity alone is inadequate to accommodate the expected surge of COVID-19 patients. Alternate care settings are needed immediately.

**Federal response:**

- Nursing homes should not be required to admit COVID positive patients.
- With support, nursing homes may be able to cohort COVID (+) patients in separate wings, floors or entire buildings. (Provision should be made for transporting frail, medically complex older adults as this brings with it many risks of adverse outcomes including hospitalization.)
- Incentivize a collaborative planning process between nursing homes, hospitals, public health and emergency management authorities within the states.
- Create a federal fund to identify and stand up alternative care sites, which could include:
  - Designated facilities for COVID-19 patients for post-acute care.
  - Designated COVID specific units within post-acute facilities.
  - Alternate sites for care in dorms, hotels, closed hospitals, convention centers, ambulatory care centers, etc. that meet emergency standards for delivering care.
- Require PALTC facilities to notify families of the current residents of planned actions whether it is that a new wing for COVID+ patients will be added, that they may be moved to another facility to accommodate space for hospital transfers, or that they have been transferred to a hospital.