

Governor Quinn Signs Bill to Control Nursing Home Infections

Governor Pat Quinn signed House Bill 1096, sponsored by State Representative Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), into law.

Effective January 1, 2012, nursing home facilities will be required to develop policies for the control and handling of infectious and communicable diseases. Each facility must designate at least one person as an Infection Prevention and Control Professional to implement these policies. "Infections are the number one cause of disease and death in nursing homes," Feigenholtz said. "We can be doing so much more to ensure that the elderly residents in these homes are in good health, starting by proactively limiting the spread of infections. This legislation makes the control of infection a priority of our state's nursing homes."

Previous legislation passed during the 96th General Assembly in Senate Bill 2601 requires incoming nursing home residents to be verbally screened for communicable diseases such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV. House Bill 1096 requires facilities to designate an individual(s) to be responsible for these screenings.

"This bill is a continuation of the monumental work the legislature has already done to clean up the state's nursing homes and ensure the highest quality of care for the elderly," said Feigenholtz. "We have already passed reforms that increased staffing ratios, mandated criminal background checks for prospective residents, and required that mentally ill patients be treated in community based programs rather than with the elderly in nursing

homes. It is my hope that this bill, coupled with these other nursing home reforms implemented over the past year, will drastically reduce the number of avoidable infections and communicable diseases in nursing homes."