



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 18, 2020

New York Changes COVID-19 Methodology to Undercount Nursing-home Deaths

The state of New York quietly changed the way it counts COVID-19 deaths among nursing-home residents in early May, possibly in a bid to hide the devastation wreaked by Governor Andrew Cuomo's executive order forcing homes to accept patients who tested positive for the virus.

According to the [Daily Caller's Andrew Kerr](#), the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) initially counted residents of long-term care facilities who died of COVID-19 in hospitals among its tally of long-term care coronavirus deaths. Around May 3, the department made a small but significant change to its methodology. It now counts only those residents who actually die in long-term care facilities, not those who die in the hospital.



NYSDOH spokeswoman Jill Montag told Kerr the change in methodology was made "in order to maintain consistency and reliability in the data as presented, and to avoid any potential for double-counting."

However, Kerr pointed out, "the reporting change has, in fact, resulted in inconsistencies." On [April 28](#), New York reported that 644 adult-care residents had died of COVID-19 either at the care facility or in the hospital. [Sixteen days later](#), by which time the state had stopped including hospital deaths in its counts, it was reporting just 165 COVID-19 deaths among adult-care residents.

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As with all coronavirus death counts, these ones must be taken with several grains of salt. Montag told Kerr the state's tables "contained lab-confirmed and, in some cases, *presumed* COVID-19 deaths." (Emphasis added.) Hospitals, after all, can [rake in more money from Medicare for a COVID-19 patient than from a patient with garden-variety pneumonia](#), and the federal government is encouraging them to [classify deaths of patients who test positive for the virus as COVID-19 deaths regardless of the actual cause of death](#).

Still, New York's move is a curious one indeed. "Of the nine states with the largest coronavirus outbreaks at long-term care facilities ... New York is the only state that omits the deaths of residents who died at hospitals from its reporting," wrote Kerr.

More curious still is the timing of the move. "New York ceased reporting deaths of long-term care residents who died in hospitals the same day it unveiled 1,700 previously undisclosed deaths that occurred on the grounds of long-term care facilities from residents presumed to have coronavirus," Kerr reported.



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That revelation occurred as Cuomo's order became major news. As [The New American](#) reported, Cuomo issued an edict on March 25 prohibiting nursing homes from denying residents "re-admission or admission ... solely based on a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of COVID-19" even though the virus was known to be exceptionally dangerous to the elderly.

Cuomo's order has surely played a part in the over 5,000 COVID-19 deaths in New York nursing homes. "This is *three times the total deaths* in Florida (counting everyone, not just nursing home residents), a state with considerably more elderly," we observed.

By no longer counting nursing-home residents who died in the hospital in its nursing-home death counts, New York may be able to greatly reduce its seeming nursing-home deaths and mask the fatal results of Cuomo's order, which he rescinded May 11.

While the counting change may benefit Cuomo, it will do a disservice to the people of New York. Sally Aiken, president of the National Association of Medical Examiners, told Kerr that "from a public health point of view, tracking the possible location of exposure to COVID-19 is important."

"It is important to track possible exposures, and not doing so accurately interferes with appropriate public health response," she added.

Betsy McCaughey, chairwoman of the Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths, told Kerr New York should resume its prior method of counting nursing-home deaths.

"It would be a more accurate reflection of the peril at nursing homes," McCaughey said. "If you look at the more accurate figures reported by other states, it's reasonable to conclude that half of all deaths in the United States are among nursing home residents and that rather than shutting down the economy they could have focused resources on nursing homes."

Considering that Cuomo has been one of the most prominent perpetrators of the lockdown regime, that's probably one more reason he prefers keep the truth under wraps.



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