

New York Governor Cuomo Advisors Rewrote Nursing Home Report to Conceal Covid Death Toll

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New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s top advisers successfully intervened in pushing state health officials scrub a public report showing that by July 2020, nearly 10,000 New York nursing home residents had died in the pandemic, according to a late-Thursday report in the [Wall Street Journal](#).

At the urging of Cuomo advisers, the report excluded nursing home residents who later died in hospitals after becoming sick in long-term facilities, resulting in a “significant undercount of the death toll attributed to the state’s most vulnerable population,” according to the report.

“The Health Department resisted calls by state and federal lawmakers, media outlets and others to release the [full] data for another eight months,” according to the *Journal*.

State officials now say more than 15,000 residents of nursing homes and other long-term-care facilities were confirmed or presumed to have died from Covid-19 since March of last year—counting both those who died in long-term-care facilities and those who died later in hospitals. That figure is about 50% higher than earlier official death tolls. -WSJ

The published version of the data said just 6,432 nursing home residents had died, when in fact over 15,000 residents of nursing homes were either confirmed or presumed to have died of COVID-19 since last March. Notably, Cuomo’s administration issued a March 25 directive that no nursing home could refuse to readmit residents or admit new residents who had COVID-19.

In February, federal prosecutors in Brooklyn asked the Cuomo administration to produce information on nursing-home deaths from the July report, said people familiar with the matter.

This “incident” begs the question: what other things did “they” lie about in 2020, and why? <https://t.co/yzXg1VqIsI>

— Barbarian Capital (@BarbarianCap) [March 5, 2021](#)

When asked for comment, Cuomo's office said on Thursday that they had concerns over the accuracy of out-of-facility deaths, which is why they advocated to exclude that data.

"The out-of-facility data was omitted after DOH could not confirm it had been adequately verified," said Beth Garvey, special counsel and senior adviser to Cuomo - while "one official familiar with the back-and-forth between the Health Department and Mr. Cuomo's advisers said state Health Commissioner Howard Zucker agreed the out-of-facility data shouldn't be included in the report."

"[The Department of Health] was comfortable with the final report and believes fully in its conclusion that the primary driver that introduced Covid into the nursing homes was brought in by staff," said Health Department spokesman, Gary Holmes.

The Health Department updated the report on Feb. 11 to include out-of-facility deaths of nursing-home residents, saying its conclusions remained unchanged by the new data.

State lawmakers from both parties have said the out-of-facility death data was critical for them to evaluate nursing-home policies that could prevent future fatalities. They said the Cuomo administration's decision to delay its release constitutes a coverup of data the governor knew would be damaging to his political stature. -WSJ

Cuomo's top aide, Melissa DeRosa, [infuriated state lawmakers](#) during a Feb. 10 virtual meeting, when she admitted to sidelining a legislative request for the data due to fears that the Trump DOJ would use it to investigate. Of note, the DOJ's Civil Rights Division began requesting data on nursing home deaths from New York and other Democratic-leaning states in August.

According to the July report, nursing homes were already full of COVID patients when the March 25 policy was enacted, and was attributed to staff who brought it with them to work.

Cuomo, who is also embroiled in two sexual harassment allegations, has [refused to step down](#) following repeated calls from both sides of the aisle.

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