

# Bamboo Health



THE COVID REBOUND:

## How Real-Time Alerts Can Help SNFs Solve Three Key Challenges

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 **Skilled Nursing News**

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# The COVID Rebound

## HOW REAL-TIME ALERTS CAN HELP SNFs SOLVE THREE KEY CHALLENGES

In the face of unprecedented challenges, starting with the COVID-19 pandemic, skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) worked valiantly for their patients and organizations. Today, SNFs will continue to manage the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic as they rebuild patient census and renew their collective spirits.

As it stands today, SNFs are more prepared to contain and combat the virus than they were in early 2020. However, that doesn't mean the future will be without its hardships. Operators and staff must confront three challenges:

1. **PREPARATION.** Continue to proactively identify COVID-19 hot spots and patients at risk of contracting the virus, as well as prepare their buildings and staff to care for these patients.
2. **CENSUS.** Rebuild census by re-engaging with patients who are in the emergency department (ED) and other acute settings.
3. **REFERRALS.** Recapture referrals and strengthen community partnerships with Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), acute-care partners, and other community providers.

This white paper reveals how SNFs can address all three of the challenges, and how real-time patient data and technology tools can serve as a guiding light along the way.



# Proactively Identifying Risk & Preparing for COVID-19 Patients

Entering 2020, no one knew that the coronavirus would dominate the healthcare system as it has, with SNFs at the center of the crisis. **Skilled care providers must know who is entering their building, and more specifically, which patients have COVID-19 or have been exposed to the virus.**

Once a SNF knows that a COVID-19 patient is in their building, there are several steps to properly prepare staff to meet appropriate protocols. First and foremost, SNF administrators should identify the volume and risk level of the patients in or entering their building to allocate personal protective equipment (PPE) correctly to staff.

Administrators must also apply appropriate testing protocols and be prepared with designated quarantine wards for infected patients. Additionally, SNFs have to know the status of their COVID-19-risk patients who are in the hospital with a chance to return.

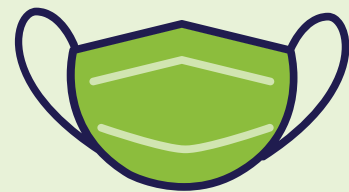
**Bamboo Health, a care coordination technology company that helps a multitude of healthcare organizations across the continuum collaborate on their shared patients, began working toward this goal at the outset of the pandemic.**

## CMS SNF GUIDANCE ON COVID-19: SIMPLE TIPS AND DIAGNOSIS CODES

In November 2020, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a series of guidelines for SNF operators on how to help nursing home staff, residents, and visitors remain safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, with steps as simple as they are vital: six-foot social distancing, mask-wearing, and limited visitors.

As for specific diagnosis codes to keep track of, here are six important ones:

- Encounter for screening for COVID-19 (Z11.52)
- Contact with and (suspect) exposure to COVID-19 (Z20.822)
- Personal history of COVID-19 (Z86.16)
- Multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS) (M35.81)
- Multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS) (M35.89)
- Pneumonia due to coronavirus disease 2019 (J12.82)



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# The Pings Impact: The COVID-19 Flag Feature

Bamboo Health's Pings platform provides real-time notifications whenever patients receive care across the continuum. Pings eliminates the need for manual data entry because the platform applies the COVID-19 Flag to any patient who has a clinical encounter on the Bamboo Health network that involves a COVID-19-associated diagnosis.

**“We implemented Bamboo Health’s COVID-19 Flag, which automatically alerts our team members in real time when patients potentially exposed to the virus have care events outside of our four walls,”** says Alex Jean-Baptiste, chief nursing officer at Massachusetts-based Family Health Centers of Worcester.

“The flag helps us see our patients who have presented to Emergency Departments or hospitals, who are receiving care for COVID-19 or testing for the virus. The flag has also helped us with coordination of follow-up care by helping us know of staff or patients who may have been exposed to the virus.”

Operators using the platform can filter patients who have a COVID-19-associated diagnosis to quickly identify patients at risk, or those who have presented with symptoms. **As a result, administrators quickly know who must be quarantined, what type of staffing is needed, and how to properly procure and distribute PPE.**



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**“We made a concerted product effort in March [of 2020] to build specific functionality in our platform that identifies COVID-19 patients without having to do a significant amount of communication with the acute care staff.”**

*Natalie Sheehan, MBA,  
Product Marketing  
Manager at Bamboo Health*



# Rebuilding Census through Patient Engagement

In 2020, SNFs took a major hit in occupancy. In the third quarter of the year, SNF occupancy nationwide was at 74%, far below the 85% occupancy in February 2020 prior to COVID-19 becoming a global pandemic, according to data from the National Investment Center for Seniors Housing & Care (NIC). NIC Chief Economist Beth Burnham Mace noted that while many SNFs survived the first half of 2020 due to Congressional aid, that would not always be the case.

“As funds become exhausted and COVID-19 cases rise with little likelihood of immediate government

intervention, it will be difficult for many facilities to continue sustainable operations,” Mace said.

As COVID-19 made patients hesitant to enter SNFs if they could avoid it, home health agencies and hospitals began to fill that void. **Therefore, to rebuild census in 2021, SNFs must demonstrate their traditional value during the pandemic, and proactively conduct outreach to patients in need of receiving care at their facility.**

## BAMBOO HEALTH HELPS MANAGE HOME HEALTH CARE TRANSITIONS

Bamboo Health’s COVID-19 Flag helps SNFs prepare for patients outside of their own walls— and it helps home healthcare agencies, too. When a SNF refers a patient to home health, the SNF operator must be able to confirm that the patient is receiving home care. Bamboo Health provides those alerts.

“If you are sending a patient from SNF to home health, that SNF is getting a notification when the services start at home health,” Sheehan says. “The home health agency will also see the COVID-19 Flag and can better prepare their staff. That way, there is a whole continuity of information here that is incredibly important to manage those care transitions during a pandemic.”



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This requires operators to use real-time patient data and technology to monitor care events that occur outside of their four walls, specifically in acute care settings. Real-time alerts from Bamboo Health help organizations know when patients potentially exposed to the virus have care events outside of their facility.

“With Pings, we now know where our patients are receiving care outside of our organization, and have the ability to connect them back to our health center for appropriate follow-up care,” says Jenepher Henkins, director of care management at Family Health Center of Worcester. “Plus, the COVID-19 Flag helps us see our patients who have presented to emergency departments or hospitals, who are receiving care for COVID-19 or testing for the virus.”

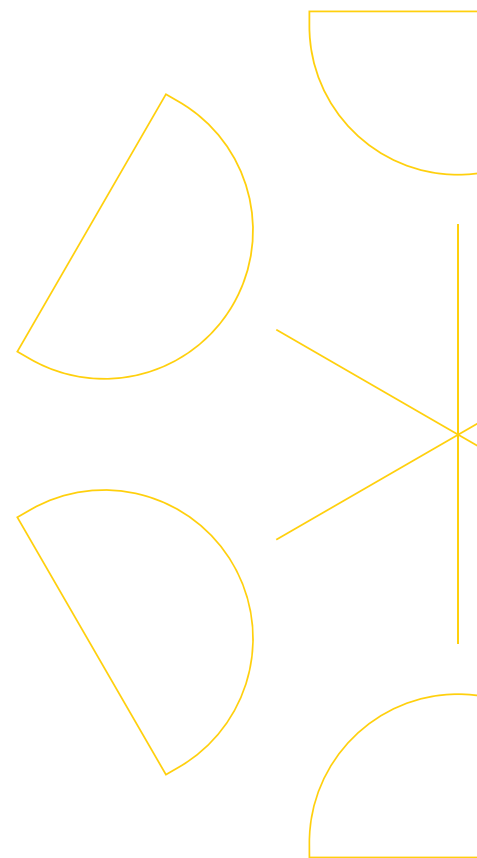
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## THE BAMBOO HEALTH IMPACT

**Bamboo Health lets SNFs monitor patients for 90 days post-discharge, so they can see which former patients are in need of resuming skilled nursing care at their facility.** SNFs can use Pings to maintain communication with their discharged patients, and then can identify which of those patients are in need of readmittance. Over 8,000 SNFs and other post-acute centers are already accustomed to using Pings to drive down missed opportunities for returns, which is a major factor during the pandemic.

“If a patient requires additional skilled nursing care shortly after an initial stay, they want to make sure the patient comes back to them,” Sheehan says. “From a revenue standpoint and a patient retention standpoint, that’s a big reason why organizations sign onto our service. And it’s just even more important now when from a census standpoint, so many facilities are looking to recover.”



# Recapturing Referrals & Strengthening Community Partnerships

The skilled nursing industry sustained a series of punches in 2020, perhaps none bigger than a hit to its public image. Mainstream news outlets often mischaracterized the industry's challenges, while patients became skittish about receiving care outside of the home.

Therefore, SNFs must refocus on strengthening their value to any community partner that touches vulnerable Medicare-eligible patient populations. Doing so will recapture patient referrals from ACOs, hospitals and health systems, provider organizations, Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) organizations, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and Area Agencies on Aging.

## Real-time data fosters a mutual benefit between SNFs and their partners: achieving high quality ratings.

“It is really important that we integrate with our hospital systems, our ACOs, our bundled payment partners to help them achieve their goals because if they don't achieve their goals, they're not going to utilize us as one of their partners,” says Eric O'Neill, Assistant VP of HCR ManorCare.

Without access to real-time data, SNF's may miss opportunities to optimize workflows and increase patient retention, ultimately resulting in readmission penalties for both themselves and their community partners.

## SNFs AS COMMUNITY PARTNERS

**The Bamboo Health Impact:** Strengthening relationships with ACOs, acute-care partners, and many other community providers also helps SNFs rebuild their patient census. SNFs play a critical role in a patient's care journey and collaboration, and strong relationships with community providers are important factors that impact patient outcomes and the referral patterns from community providers to SNFs.

Bamboo Health is central to that process. Sheehan adds: “SNFs will play an important role in the care coordination around patients who are in a population that are mostly negatively affected by COVID-19. SNFs will be a very key player in the care coordination outcomes and recovery of that patient population. Bamboo Health's Pings solution provides SNFs with the resources to effectively coordinate patient care, which strengthens the trust and relationships with their referral partners, ultimately helping SNFs rebuild their patient census.”







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The road to normalcy will be long. For some it could be much longer. However, if SNFs are to rebound from the pandemic they must balance the remaining, and hopefully diminishing, threat from the pandemic, rebuild patient census, and recapture referrals from provider partners.

**With over 2,500 hospitals and 8,000 post-acute facilities in its national network, Bamboo Health can help SNFs with all three of those requirements and hopefully reestablish SNFs hit hard by the pandemic.**





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