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**WE UNCOVER THE FACTS.
WE REVEAL THE TRUTH.**

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution exposes how Georgia fails to protect senior citizens and how their families had no way of knowing what's really going on.

Unprotected | An exclusive AJC Investigation

Part One Coming Sunday

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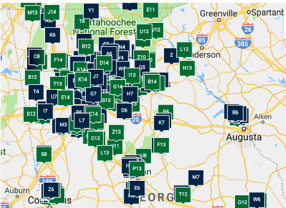
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View the documents uncovered in our investigation of Georgia's senior care homes.

FACILITY SEARCH

Any Distance Name ☐ Assisted Living ☐ Personal Care

Type	Beds	Map Key
	75	212
	105	v6
	65	67
	72	u2
	72	85



AJC.com/unprotected

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UNPROTECTED

A community conversation with the AJC's journalists, community leaders and experts on how Georgia fails to protect senior citizens.

Watch at 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 14

PRESENTED BY

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution AND **GPB** MEDIA

AJC UNPROTECTED

UNPROTECTED
BROKEN PROMISES IN GEORGIA'S SENIOR CARE INDUSTRY

Investigative reporters for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution spent almost a year digging into the records of assisted living communities and personal care homes in Georgia. Too many do not provide the safe, quality care that families expect.

AJC investigative team examines thousands of public records

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution collected thousands of public records from a variety of agencies to conduct an unprecedented examination of Georgia's private-pay senior care industry.

Among those records, the AJC analyzed Department of Community Health inspection reports for every assisted living community in Georgia and all of the state's personal care homes with 25 or more beds for the period of 2015 through 2018. The AJC also collected the state's databases of fines and other enforcement actions levied against these homes.

To check for any appeals of state actions, the newspaper gathered and examined hundreds of documents from the state Office of Administrative Hearings in cases related to care facilities that the newspaper is studying. The AJC also reviewed state Certificate of Need records to determine how many requests the state was processing for new care facilities, and collected Department of Public Health inspection reports for the dining facilities operated by the care homes.

For any home where DCH reports had allegations of abuse by caregivers, the AJC obtained and studied police incident reports to try to determine whether the allegations were being referred to law enforcement agencies. The newspaper then expanded its requests for police reports after discovering that cases of possible criminal conduct were not being referred to law enforcement, and that cases reported to police were not reflected in public DCH reports.

For more detailed information on some incidents, the AJC reviewed dozens of civil lawsuits and criminal case files, and reporters spent hours in court observing criminal proceedings. Reporters also interviewed dozens of family members, home operators, trade organizations and experts.

The AJC's project began more than two years ago when AJC reporter Carrie Teegardin began looking into questionable bond deals that had financed senior care facilities in Georgia. That investigation raised questions about the quality of care and adequacy of oversight for the entire private-pay senior care system in Georgia. Teegardin and her editor, Lois Norder, began exploring how the newspaper could study the industry and provide the public access to facility-specific records to help families make informed decisions about care for their loved ones.

Early this year, after Teegardin and Norder had obtained thousands of documents, the AJC began building a project team. AJC data specialist Nick Thieme was brought in to convert the documents into datasets and help to analyze information. Reporter Brad Schrade joined the team to help research issues, interview residents and their families and seek out others knowledgeable about concerns. Data journalist Emily Merwin DiRico joined to help create a website to provide consumers with information on the homes that was not easily available from the state. Another data specialist, Jennifer Peebles, helped with data analysis and communications with the facilities; she was joined by data intern Anila Yoganathan. Other key members include Pete Conson, who worked on visual presentations; photographers Hyosub Shin and Bob Andres and videographer Ryan Horne; copy

THE REPORTERS

Carrie Teegardin is a veteran Atlanta Journal-Constitution investigative reporter.

In 30 years at the AJC, Teegardin has written articles on a wide range of topics from health care to consumer affairs to criminal justice, financial journalism. She has won numerous state and national awards and in 2009 was named the Atlanta Press Club's Journalist of the Year.

She was a lead reporter on the newspaper's "Doctors and Sex Abuse" series in 2016 that was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in national reporting and several other national awards.

A graduate of Duke University, Teegardin grew up in Circleville, Ohio. She is the mother of two teenagers and lives in Atlanta's Grant Park Historic District.

Brad Schrade is an Atlanta native who first worked at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution in the 1990s before moving to Nashville to join The Tennessean newspaper. He rejoined the AJC in 2013 as an investigative reporter. He has received numerous journalism honors, including a 2013 Pulitzer Prize for work as part of a team at the Minneapolis Star Tribune that uncovered safety breakdowns and deaths in the state's child

OPINION

AJC SPOTLIGHT ON HOMES FOR AGED

Some ugly truths behind the glitz

Kevin Riley
Editor

It's a decision faced by more and more of us: what to do about an aging parent or spouse when they are no longer able to live independently. In this time of easy access to information, it's tempting to believe that a simple Google search can lead you to the best option — say, a senior care home.

Georgia has about 400 of them that provide care for 25 or more people. These facilities, which offer help with the routine tasks of daily living, are licensed in Georgia as assisted living communities or personal care homes.

Many of these are high-end, private-pay communities that seem to fit the need perfectly. Restaurant-style menus. Beautiful lobbies. Dining rooms with tablecloths. Private suites. They fill the gap between living independently and living in a skilled nursing home, where 24-hour medical care is required. The price tag can be up to \$8,000 per month.

Your Google search would inevitably lead to reassuring descriptions of these facilities, perhaps even of one nearby so you could easily visit every day. Their online marketing materials describe a comforting and caring staff. All the buzzwords will be there: compassionate, person-centered and highly skilled.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution dedicated itself to finding out whether that's what is really going on in these facilities.

We've found that you just can't rely on marketing claims when it comes to the senior care industry.

Too often, these facilities fail to provide the high-end care they promise. Many struggle to even provide the most basic care, resulting in injuries, humiliation and even death, our investigation found.

In a series of disturbing stories that we'll publish beginning today through the end of this year, the AJC looked closely at this booming industry by examining thousands of documents, records from state agencies, police departments and court filings. Reporters also spoke with experts, industry officials, residents and their families.

Among our findings:

- Georgia fails to adequately protect seniors in assisted living communities and large personal care homes. We found cases where homes failed to take proper steps to protect residents who fell repeatedly and cases where residents pushed emergency call pendants and waited hours for someone to respond.
- These facilities largely fail to give workers who may not be properly vetted or trained and who may be given unreasonable workloads. Two out of every five homes were cited for training violations.
- A fourth of all homes have been cited for failing to complete criminal background checks of workers. Eleven of these facilities were cited for employing someone whose criminal record should have barred them from working in senior care facilities.
- Inadequate staffing is a significant reason for problems. Nearly a fifth of all Georgia facilities have been cited for failing to have enough qualified workers on duty to meet residents' needs.
- Information about these homes compiled by the Department of Community Health, the state agency that licenses and inspects them, is vague, incomplete, outdated and confusing. That makes it nearly impossible for members of the public to find out about what's happening in these facilities.
- State regulators don't have crucial information from other government agencies. We found crimes, such as theft, abuse and exploitation, in spot checks of police reports that weren't reflected in DCH inspection reports. We also found cases where homes failed Department of Public Health food facility inspections, but DCH public records made no mention of them.
- Facilities themselves are failing to report serious incidents as required. Nearly 30% of facilities have been cited for failing to report to state regulators or to police serious incidents as required.

These regulatory failures led to this kind of statistic: In more than 100 cases, facilities lost dementia residents, because alarms failed or doors weren't properly locked or there wasn't enough staff on duty, these people wandered away from the facility. Some were found along busy roadways. One was found strung in a creek. Some spent the night outdoors in cold temperatures.

We hope this work helps if you are facing decisions about how to care for your family member. You'll want to know the things a Google search won't tell you.

Our reporters have reported on this story for nearly a year, so that our state can be informed about a critical part of Georgia's senior care system. We'll present our findings in the printed AJC and at AJC.com. Beginning Sept. 29, you can also search for all the information we have on each of these homes at AJC.com/unprotected.

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AJC.com
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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2019

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BROKEN PROMISES
OUR INVESTIGATION UNCOVERS SENIOR CARE NEGLECT

WHY PARKING REVENUE HAS FALLEN AT AIRPORT

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2019

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FAILING OUR SENIORS
AN AJC INVESTIGATION REVEALS GAPS IN PROTECTION.

NEW DETAILS IN TRUMP WHISTLEBLOWER CASE