



# Physical Therapy in Florida's Rural and Urban Assisted Living Communities

## BACKGROUND

Assisted living communities (ALCs) in Florida play an important role in the long-term care of over 4 million older adults throughout the state.<sup>1</sup> However, older Floridians living in rural regions have limited access to ALCs and the services they provide.<sup>2</sup> Physical therapy is a type of healthcare service offered in many of these ALCs. This therapy is especially important because it assists older adults in the maintenance and promotion of physical functioning.<sup>3</sup> In particular, it has been found to build balance, encourage flexibility, enhance mobility, and reinforce strength.<sup>4</sup> Also, engagement in physical therapy can minimize fall risks, which is important in ALCs, where an average of 58% of the resident population faces walking difficulties. Despite this information, it remains unclear as to how many of Florida's ALCs offer

\*Data was collected on February 6, 2020

strength) to help bolster their independence. Moreover, older adults tend to occupy more rural areas compared to urban areas, highlighting the importance of physical therapy services in these areas.<sup>2</sup> Policymakers should work to increase the number of ALCs that provide physical therapy throughout Florida. Moreover, they should target ALCs located in rural counties to ensure that residents within these communities can take advantage of such a service.

## REFERENCES

1. Hyer, K., MacDonald, G., Black, K., Badana, A., Murphy, S., & Haley, W. (2017). Preparing for Florida's older adult population with user-friendly demographic maps. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 29(1), 33-44.
2. Gunderson, A., Menachemi, N., Brummel Smith, K., & Brooks, R. (2006). Physicians who treat the elderly in rural Florida: T

Table 1. Florida Assisted Living Communities By County (2020)

