

# The Advocate

Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

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Issue #12

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## MESSAGE FROM JEANNE

Our sympathy goes to Connie Hadden in the loss of her mother in November. Her mom was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and lived in a nursing home. As her mom slowly slipped away, Connie was able to spend all of her time with her mom, which is such a beautiful gift. We are all very fortunate to have someone with such kindness, compassion and dedication working as an ombudsman. Please keep Connie and her family in your thoughts through this holiday season.

We have also received word that Carolyn Porter, a long-time Resident Advocate, has passed away. Carolyn fought tirelessly to improve the long-term care system. She was a strong advocate and will be missed.

## Annual Report

Every year, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman's Office is required to submit an annual report (October-September) to the Governor, the legislature and stakeholders. In our annual report, we include detailed information about RAC. This year, our resident advocates reported 1932 different complaints. Out of all 1932 concerns that were identified, resident advocate volunteers reported that they were able to resolve 69% of them. That means our volunteers resolved 1328 concerns. Wow! Concerns about the environment topped the charts this year. 25% of the concerns that RAC identified were related to environment issues, such as equipment/building disrepair, cleanliness, heating, cooling, noise, etc. In a close second, with 23%, were concerns about care. Care issues included concerns about call lights not being answered, personal hygiene and symptoms/pain not managed. Here is some more information that was compiled for the report:

- We have 740 current RAC members that have served on a committee for 10 years or more.
- We have 71 RAC members that have served for 15 years or more.
- And we have 16 RAC members that have served for 25 years or more!
- 106 of our current members serve on more than one committee.
- Our current members are an average of 67 years old.
- This year we had 616 resignations. (This number is extremely high because we sent a letter to all committees asking for updates at the beginning of January. We found out that there were many people that had resigned from the RAC and had not notified our office yet).
- We had 259 new applications this year.
- 237 new RAC members attended the new-member telephone orientation.
- 948 RAC members attended the annual training last year.
- As of the end of September, we had 2436 Resident Advocate Volunteers.

## Advancing Excellence Campaign

High quality nursing home care – where each person gets the care that is right for them – is important to us as advocates. People who live in long-term care facilities and their families should be able to expect the best possible care and quality of life. *The Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes* campaign is the first ever national campaign to measure quality by setting measurable "clinical quality goals" and "organizational improvement goals". *Advancing Excellence* is a national 2-year campaign to improve quality of care and life in nursing homes

across the country. Every nursing home in Iowa may participate by voluntarily pledging to focus on 3 or more campaign goals. Campaign goals can be: reduce pressure ulcers, reduce use of physical restraints, improve pain management for long-stay residents, improve pain for short-term stay residents, establish facility targets and strategies for improving quality, assess resident and family satisfaction, increase staff retention and increase consistent assignment of staff so residents can receive care from the same caregivers. Nursing homes that participate will have free access to assistance and information from quality experts to help them meet their targeted goals. The majority of the resources are available through the campaign's website at

[www.nhqualitycampaign.org](http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org). There are currently 213 nursing homes in Iowa that have signed up for *Advancing Excellence!*

Why should RAC members be involved?

Residents, families, Ombudsmen and even RAC members are crucial to the success of this campaign. We need all concerned citizens to contribute ideas and suggestions as a part of this quality improvement initiative. RAC involvement will encourage nursing homes to participate, assist facilities in choosing goals, and support facilities as they work to improve resident care and quality of life. Some ideas for you to get started are:

- Find out more about the campaign by visiting the official website – [www.nhqualitycampaign.org](http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org).
- Click on the "For Consumers" button and register as a participating consumer to show that you want nursing homes to strive for excellence.
- Ask your nursing home staff if they are participating in the campaign.
- If the nursing home where you visit is participating, ask if they will share the goals they have chosen. Discuss what steps they will be taking to improve quality and how RAC members can participate.
- If the nursing home where you visit is not participating in the campaign, talk to the administration about it and encourage them to sign-up. It is okay for you to suggest which goals you think would be most useful to residents. In fact, in some

facilities, the residents and families have chosen the goals for the facility.

- Talk to the residents, families and other RAC members – Educate them about this campaign and encourage them to participate.
- Discuss the campaign during your RAC meetings. Volunteer to brainstorm as a committee on how to improve in the areas chosen by the nursing home to work on.

## Shining Star Award

### **"TOUGH ENOUGH TO CARE" STAR ADVOCATE**



Do you know a resident advocate committee member who deserves special mention? In each newsletter we will recognize someone who has been nominated. Please call or e-mail Tonya with your suggestion.

This quarter's STAR ADVOCATE is.....

### *Elsie Gray*

Elsie Gray is the Resident Advocate Committee Chairperson for the Good Samaritan Center in Red Oak, IA. She has been a member of the committee for over 10 years. This November, in an attempt to recruit new members, Elsie arranged a radio interview at Country Sunshine Radio in Red Oak. Elsie, along with the RAC Program Coordinator (Tonya Amos) spent about 40 minutes on the air with Jerry Deetz, discussing the RAC program and trying to recruit volunteers for the area. We want to thank Elsie for this wonderful idea on recruiting new members. What a truly unique and exciting experience for one of our members!

## 2007 Meeting Minutes Summaries

Please review your meeting minute summaries for the calendar year 2007. Every complaint that you turn in for the year needs to be marked either resolved or unresolved.

*As a reminder, any complaints that are resolved from calendar year 2007 need to be turned into our office by March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 unless an exception is granted with our office.*

## Rule Review

A feature that will appear in each newsletter is a nursing home regulation that will be quoted and discussed. Please call Tonya if there are certain topics that you would like to be reviewed. This quarter's topic: Activities.

Resident Activities Program.

*Chapter 481-58.26(1) states "Each nursing facility shall provide an organized resident activity program for the group and for the individual resident which shall include suitable activities for evenings and weekends.*

Do you like BINGO? How about crafts? Do you enjoy sing-a-longs? You may like these activities, but not everyone would like attending these types of planned events. Every facility should have a variety of activities, including activities that are for a large group of people and some that are individualized. Not all people who live in nursing homes can or want to come out of their room. Those people should be visited individually to see what they would like to do. Some individual activities ideas are: music, card-playing, reading books, or just a one-to-one conversation. It also says in the rule that activities shall be held at a variety of different times. Morning, afternoon, evening, weekends...we all operate on different schedules and there should be times to accommodate all.

## Question & Answer Session

*Q:* What are some things that you can do to encourage a person to talk?

*A:* Asking open ended questions that can't be answered by a simple yes or no is an effective way to engage a person in conversation. Remember that it is important to be patient and wait until the person answers completely before moving the conversation forward with new questions. The elderly often need a little extra time mid-sentence to pause and consider what they will say next. At times, the person may stop because his or her mind has wandered from the topic under discussion. During the long pauses, form some questions relevant to the ideas that they were expressing when speaking. Then, if the person remains quiet longer than you find comfortable,

ask a question to get things going again. Don't feel that you always need to have a constant stream of chatter in order for the visit to be successful. Sometimes simply sitting quietly with a person is enough.

*Q:* What do you do when the person you are visiting seems too tired or too ill to have a conversation?

*A:* Whether it is your first time visiting, or someone that you have visited with frequently, ask the person if he or she is too tired for company right now. You could offer to sit quietly for a while, or if they prefer a later visit, suggest a specific day and time that you will be back at the facility so that it is clear that you really want to visit with them in the future. Our office also provides calling cards. These cards remind the resident that you were there for a visit, and allows for a place to include your name and phone number in case the person would like to call you with some concerns at a later time.

*Q:* Some elders have a hard time thinking positively. This could be because of the loss of their home, their children are not around, or feeling useless and dependent. Are there things that RAC members can do to help them have a more positive attitude?

*A:* We encourage RAC volunteers to visit new residents shortly after they move in to the facility to get acquainted. By being dependable with your visits, and having a consistently upbeat and friendly attitude, you are making a difference to someone who lives in a nursing facility. Most elderly people need to feel that they contribute in a relationship. You can help them restore their sense of self worth by letting them know that you enjoy your visits with them, what you learn from them, and the ways that you can help them if they do have a concern.

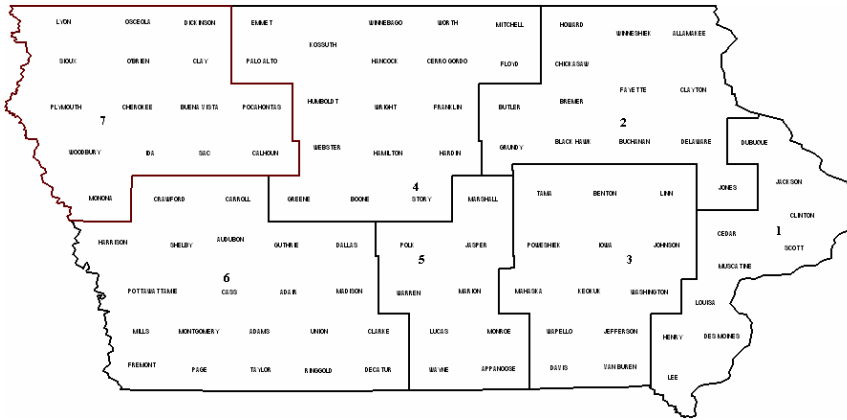
## Call Us!

We are starting a new year and thought that it would be a good time to remind you to call our office if you need assistance with anything. We can help you clarify rules and regulations, help you investigate a concern that might be too in-depth for a volunteer, provide you with resources (meeting minute forms, manuals, envelopes, etc.) or even help you recruit new members. We are only a phone call away so feel free to call anytime!

# OFFICE INFORMATION

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is a unit within the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs. All members of this unit can be reached at **800-532-3213** or at the direct phone numbers listed here.

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