

The Advocate

Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

October 2008

Issue #15

Greetings

A Volunteer is a person who remembers to do the thing to make other people happy, who takes the loneliness out of the alone by talking to them, who is concerned when others are unconcerned, who has the courage to be a prophet and to say the things that have to be said for the good of all.

Office Updates:

We are happy to announce that Tonya is now the proud mother of a baby girl! Denali Ann Amos was born on July 31st. She weighed 7 pounds, 8 ounces and was born with a ton of hair! After 6 weeks of maternity leave, Tonya is now back to work and ready to help you with any RAC needs.

Connie Hadden, the Local LTC Ombudsman for North Central Iowa has taken a new position at the Evangelical Free Church Home in Boone. She will be the Director of Resident and Family Services. In her 4 years as a LTC Ombudsman, Connie has investigated over 1400 complaints, visited facilities over 900 times and has been a tremendous advocate for the people living in long-term care. Connie's message to Resident Advocates: "Please know how much I appreciate you and all you do, and know how much I enjoyed working with each of you. You are very dedicated and sincere people who care very much about people who reside in nursing homes. Thank you." We wish Connie much success and happiness in her new job – she will be greatly missed by all of us!

TV Converter Box

As many of you already know, The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 requires full-power television stations to cease analog broadcasts and switch to digital after February 17, 2009. Consumers receiving free, over-the-air television on analog televisions will

need to act to ensure their televisions continue to work when full power television stations go all-digital. Viewers of over-the-air television need to look at each analog set that is not connected to cable, satellite or other pay television service and make a timely decision. They can connect their television to cable, satellite or pay television service; they can replace it with a digital TV or they may keep it working with a TV Converter Box. It was announced in September that residents of licensed nursing homes, intermediate care facilities, assisted living facilities and household that use a post office box for mail delivery will be eligible to request coupons from the TV Converter Box Coupon Program. Persons who live in LTC facilities will be required to provide their name, address of the facility and whether they receive television exclusively with an antenna, or through cable, satellite or other television service. A family member or representative from the licensed facility may apply for one coupon for each nursing home resident, but the coupon will be mailed directly to the resident.

It has been suggested that those choosing to use a TV Converter Box should act soon. Nursing home residents who want a Converter Box should apply soon and buy the Box as soon as their coupon arrives in the mail.

Resident Advocates may want to ask facility staff questions about the TV Converter Box. Questions could be:

- How will staff know which residents need a converter box?
- Will there be a staff person available to help residents apply for the TV Converter Box Coupon?
- When they receive the Coupon, will there be staff available to help the resident purchase the Box?
- Who will help the residents install the Box?

Meeting Minute Summaries

It is never too early to start the review of your meeting minute summaries from 2008. Please review your summaries. Are there still unresolved issues that need a second look? Are there concerns that are now resolved? If so, please let us know about all concerns that have been resolved by February 28th, 2009. This is the deadline to submit all resolutions for 2008. If you are not sure about your committee's resolution rate, feel free to contact our office and speak with Tonya or Katie.

Resident Advocate Survey

In May 2008, we sent a survey to all of the volunteers about the Resident Advocate Committee program. We are excited to announce that 645 of you completed the survey and sent it back to our office! We will use the results in an attempt to better our Resident Advocate program. Here are some of the results:

- 86% of volunteers are female
- Average age – 72 years old
- 9% of the respondents report that they have a family member that lives at the facility where they serve as a RAC member
- 98% report that they attend the quarterly committee meetings on a regular basis
- 100% report that they receive and read *The Advocate*!!!
- Only 8% would prefer to have the newsletter electronically
- 9% report that they use the Department of Elder Affairs/RAC website
- 46% say that they have no access to the internet
- Only 26% of respondents said that they wanted additional training (ICN or Teleconference)

The Advocate – E-mail

In our RAC survey, many of you indicated that you would like to receive *The Advocate* as an e-mail copy instead of a hard copy in the mail. If you would like us to send you an e-mail copy, please send an e-mail to: Tonya.Amos@iowa.gov. In the subject line, please type: Advocate. The only message that you have to type is your e-mail address. Thanks and let Tonya know if you have any questions.

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.....

Carol Myers

Carol was nominated by the Local LTC Ombudsman, Connie Hadden:

“I would like to nominate Carol Myers for the RAC Shining Star Advocate. Carol has been a Resident Advocate Volunteer for over 9 years at the Rolling Green Village in Nevada.

I have worked with Carol on a couple of difficult cases – one involved family members and their disagreement as to what care needed to be provided to their mother. Carol referred the case to the Ombudsman's office because she knew that the family would not successfully come to a resolution as to their mother's care and their mother was suffering the consequences – stress and frustration. We did get the issue resolved.

Carol did a wonderful job pulling together information and getting the case as far as she could before referring it on.

Carol fields many calls from family members who have some confusion regarding the Resident Advocate Committee and the Ombudsman responsibilities, family members who disagree as to their parents' care, family members wanting to move their parent out and others who want their parent to remain there. Carol has said, 'I always state that if the resident is capable of decision-making, the resident wishes must be granted'. Thank you, Carol, for being such a passionate advocate for residents living in long-term care facilities.”

Rule Review

Please call Tonya if there are certain topics that you would like reviewed in our "Rules Review" column. This quarter's topic: Resident Baths.

Resident Care & Personal Services:

Chapter 481-58.16(10) states "Residents shall receive a bath of their choice, based on the facility's accommodations, as needed to maintain proper hygiene."

Do you prefer to take a shower...or a bath? How many times a week do you do this? Do you like a certain brand of shampoo, body wash, shaving gel? When living at home, we take showers and baths for granted. When a person moves into a nursing home, they are often not given the choice of a shower or bath, and often times they are assigned a "bath-time" twice a week. A resident may refuse a bath because he/she:

- Prefers a shower instead of a bath
- Prefers their shower at a different time or a different day
- Does not feel well that day
- Is uneasy about the aide assigned to help
- Is worried about falling

The facility staff then may say that the resident has refused their bath for that day and then do not try again. It doesn't have to be this way. As stated in the rules, a facility must demonstrate that it attempts to accommodate resident needs. The staff should make the necessary adjustments realizing that the resident may not be refusing to be clean but refusing the bath under the circumstances provided. Resident Advocates could help the resident determine what adjustments could be made in the plan of care to accommodate his/her bathing needs.

Facility staff and Resident Advocates should work together to assist all residents in maintaining and/or achieving independent functioning, dignity and well-being to the extent possible in accordance with the residents' own preferences.

Sprinklers in Nursing Homes

All long-term care facilities are required to have automatic sprinkler systems in place by August 13th, 2013. The Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has said that the 5 year phase-in would allow all facilities sufficient time to comply with the sprinkler rule, which was prompted by fires

in 2003 that resulted in the death of 31 residents. Older facilities at that time were exempt from the sprinkler requirement. The final rule is expected to affect many nursing facilities, primarily older buildings that were previously exempt from the sprinkler requirement.

Questions for RAC members to ask facility staff:

- Do you have a sprinkler system in place?
- If yes, is it inspected and maintained as required by law?
- If no, what are the facility's plans for the sprinkler system?
- How will the residents be affected during the installation process?

RAC Training

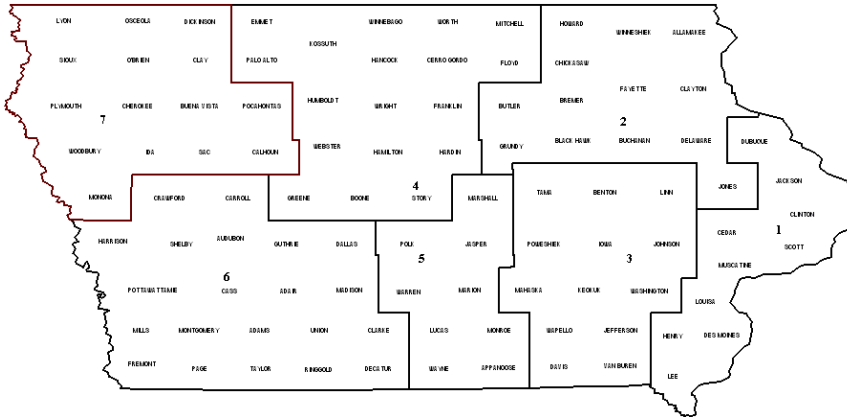
Annual Training this year was a success with over 830 attendees! Although we are excited about the number of you who did attend, we soon realized that we had over 1500 volunteers who did not attend the training. To improve our numbers, we plan to have over 50 trainings in 2009. Most of these training opportunities will be "in-person". There will be also be a telephone training offered but it will only be for those who can not attend in person. Please remember that effective August 2008, all RAC members will be required to attend at least one training every two years. Questions about this can be directed to Tonya.

During the training this year, we had several questions about getting permission from people who have dementia. The common question was: if someone has dementia, can they give permission for a RAC member to investigate concerns? The answer is yes, any resident who is able to voice an issue and ask for help can give permission to investigate. Please do not discredit comments made by a person with dementia; there is almost always some truth in what the person is telling you. Try to get as many details and facts as you can before bringing the concern to the facility staff. It is important that a person with dementia participates in making as many decisions about their day-to-day activities. Staff should involve residents in choosing what clothes to wear, when to go to activities, when to take a nap, and whether they want an alternative food item at dinner. Not everyone with dementia is able to make all of these decisions, but it is essential that staff encourage them to participate in the many decisions that are needed throughout the day.

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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