

NEWS RELEASE



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Turn, Turn, Turn – The Changing Face of Nursing Homes

If you haven't visited a nursing home in quite some time, you may remember "yesterday's" nursing home. It was a sad place to visit, where foul smells and people yelling for help in the hallways overloaded your senses and emotions, often leaving you with a horrible feeling inside. That image is unfairly locked into the memories of many, who have not yet visited "today's" nursing home.

In the past 20 years, The Nursing Home Reform Law of 1987, The Americans with Disabilities Act, and other laws and legislative changes have called for sweeping changes for nursing home residents. Most important, a new focus is now placed on quality of LIFE, as well as quality of care. Implementation and change have been slow, according to some advocacy groups, but change is occurring and we are moving farther and farther away from "yesterday's" nursing home.

"Today's" nursing home has changed in many ways apparent to residents, families and visitors. Here are just a few:

Person-centered care is more prevalent than ever before. Each resident is looked at as an individual, instead of part of a large group, where assumptions can be made and individuality can be lost. According to the Nursing Home Reform Law of 1987, nursing homes must care for residents "*in such a manner and in such an environment* as will promote maintenance or enhancement of the *quality of life of each resident.*" According to the Center for Medicare &

Medicaid Service's Long Term Care Facility Requirements, a resident has the right to “**choose** activities, schedules and health care consistent with his or her interests, assessments and plans of care; **interact** with members of the community both inside and outside the facility; and **make choices** about aspects of his or her life that are significant to the resident.”

Odors and smells are no longer commonplace. Regulatory agencies are cracking down on persistent odors and uncleanliness, changing the experience for us as residents, visitors and employees from “yesterday’s” foul-odors.

Resident rights and protections abound that did not exist years ago. Residents have immediate access to the Ombudsman, physician and family members and reasonable access to other visitors, according to the resident’s wishes. Residents are protected from the use of chemical or physical restraints, except when necessary for the resident’s safety or medical treatment. Gone are the days of residents strapped to chairs in hallways, with limited opportunity for visitation and involvement.

These and many other protections and policies are moving us forward to a different era for nursing home care. Our timing couldn’t be better to change the face of our nursing homes. In the coming years, analysts predict that our aging population will be larger than ever before. Visit a friend, neighbor or fellow parishioner today in a local nursing home, volunteer your time or talents there, or learn more about how you can become an active participant on the legislative front. We have the power to change the care we want for our families, for ourselves.

Volunteer long-term care Ombudsman serve at every nursing home and adult care facility in Wyoming County. They are trained professionals who assist with and investigate resident concerns, and advocate for the rights of residents in long-term care facilities. If you believe that the rights of your loved one have been violated, or if you would like advice or assistance, call Lifespan at 585.244.8400 x114. The Ombudsman assigned to the facility can assist you with your concern.

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