

Arkansas Advocates for Nursing Home Residents

“What does “ Culture Change” mean in caring for nursing home residents?”

Arkansas Advocates for Nursing Home Residents (AANHR) are repeatedly asked the meaning of “Culture Change.” The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services supports the notion that “Culture Change is simply the fulfillment of part of the Nursing Home Reform Law of 1987, OBRA. This law requires that each nursing home “care for its residents in such a manner and in such an environment as will promote maintenance or enhancement of the quality of life of each resident.” This requirement emphasizes dignity, choice, and self-determination for residents, as do the principles of “Culture Change.” Furthermore, each nursing home is required by law to “provide services and activities to attain or maintain the highest practicable psychosocial, mental, and psychosocial well-being of each resident in accordance with a written plan of care which is initially prepared, with participation to the extent practicable, of the resident, the resident’s family or legal representative.” This means that a resident should not decline in health or well-being as a result of the way a nursing home provides care! These provisions of the law require that resident care should be individualized to the need of the resident. “Culture Change” is an attempt to make this part of the law a reality.

“Culture Change,” (person-directed care) is defined as the common name given to the process of transforming older adult services based on person-directed values and practices where the voices of the elders and those working with them are considered and respected and person always comes before task. A home-like atmosphere along with consistent assignment of direct care employees with residents is also an important part of the “Culture Change” movement.

Our organization has seen first hand what happens when you have nursing home owners who care and are dedicated to following the laws put in place by the “Nursing Home Reform Act of 1987.” Greenhurst Nursing Center in Charleston, AR, has been a family owned nursing home for thirty years. Their commitment to care for residents by following the laws set forth over thirty years ago shows in every aspect of “culture Change.” They are dedicated to person-directed care in a homelike atmosphere.

AANHR is dedicated to working with various other groups advocating for nursing home residents in a continual effort to educate the public. One such group is the Pioneer Network, formed in 1997, to advocate for person-directed care through “Culture Change.” AANHR is proud to be a sponsor of the Pioneer Network’s Ninth National Conference that was held in Little Rock, AR, August 12-14, 2009.

AANHR knows there are some nursing homes in our state that are dedicated to giving good care but all AANHR can do is go by the State and Federal findings. The latest survey data shows 95% of Arkansas nursing homes were cited for health and safety standards. Sadly, the findings nationwide are similar. The recognition for the culture to change and demand that nursing home residents finally get the care the laws have required for over thirty years cannot come a moment too soon. Meanwhile, AANHR will continue to carry out our mission, “To protect and improve the quality of care and life for residents in Arkansas nursing homes.”