

Resident Rights Month is here! Could it be another year gone in the long-term care (nursing home) world, and a new one at the starting line? What laws protecting us have changed or are waiting in the shadows? I don't know, but I would love to tell you of just a few laws made since 1976 when I first entered a long-term care facility.

We are to be treated the way we want to be treated---with dignity and respect and honoring our choices/preferences. We should NOT be treated, as some employees do, by referring to us as a job and not a person---as "room 203 bed B" or a "feed." Sometimes we are made to feel as if we are all alike receiving the same care. We have the right to be treated as the individual we are and not like a job to be done on an assembly line. We are NOT all alike. We are not just a warm body in a room. We have feelings too.

Not only should we receive care and responses to our requests, in a timely manner, but also with the utmost respect due. We have opinions too. We are adults and as such should be treated that way. Staff should NEVER talk down to us FOR ANY REASON.

We have the right to religious freedom to attend and worship in a manner we are accustomed to. Catholic or Protestant, it doesn't matter. We can worship without fear of retribution.

We have the right to talk to our Long-Term Care Ombudsman who can show us laws to fit the problem we are having. With knowledge of the laws, we become empowered to resolve the problems on our own and take care of issues effectively. We also have the right for our Ombudsman to advocate for us if we need help.

We have the right to vote in private without being told who to vote for.

We can have visitors not only during "regular visiting hours" but at other times also. This is our home!

We have the right to participate in Resident Council, at least once a month, where our concerns are addressed and sent to the proper department for resolution.

We have the right to complain WITHOUR FEAR of retaliation.

We have the right to make our own choices as they are presented and not be second guessed. To put it in an easier way, WE RULE! Laws guide us in a way that sets the path for our self-determination.

When we move into a long-term care home, we go through many necessary changes which sometimes seem hard to swallow, then a new law is passed. For us who remember a time before resident rights laws, we have welcomed, with open arms, laws benefitting EACH resident's quality of life. Life is better for all if laws are followed. This year's resident rights month theme "Stand for Quality" is just that . . . quality. And it is our fundamental right as residents of long-term care homes to receive quality care!

Happy Resident Rights Month!

Until next time I am Judith Mangum . . . Resident.