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Advocacy Suggestions for Nursing Home Residents and their Families

- **Be familiar** with staff members – their names, roles, and responsibilities in resident care. Know who is in charge of various areas of care and how grievances are addressed. Read the resident admission agreement carefully making note of what services are provided and under what circumstances the facility might discharge the resident. Ask to see a copy of the facility's survey report to learn about past problems in the facility.
- **Educate** the facility staff about your own or your loved one's preferences, daily routine, activities, work, etc. when living independently and work with them to formulate an individualized care plan which will take these factors into account. The care plans should encourage and enable the resident to attain or maintain their highest practicable level of physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being.
- **Pay attention** to the care provided and how it impacts on your own or your loved one's condition: hygiene, mood, energy level, weight, etc. Note changes and try to determine if they are due to any deficiencies in the care provided. Monitor whether staff are responsive to resident requests for assistance and are kind, patient, and respectful in their provision of care.
- **Report concerns** and problems to staff members as soon as they arise so that they can be addressed immediately. First voice concerns to those directly involved. If this action yields no result, report your concern to staff supervisors.
- **DOCUMENT** your concerns and actions taken to report them: the names of those involved, date, time, and details of the event, who the concern has been reported to and when, what steps are taken to remedy the problem, and the outcome.
- **Request a meeting** with appropriate staff people to address concerns you may have. Focus the meeting on the outcome that you would like to see and how it can be accomplished. The meeting should result in a concrete plan that addresses the problem and identifies who is responsible for implementing it.
- **Be assertive**, persistent, and confident, but respectful in your interactions with staff. Clearly state your specific concern and the outcome you would like to see. Remember that, as consumers, you

or your loved one should expect high quality services, *and* acting respectfully will avoid creating ill will.

- **Organize a resident or family council** with other concerned residents or family members. Resident and family councils can be effective and powerful tools for maintaining a consumer voice in the facility and for addressing facility-wide concerns with administrators.
- **Seek outside help** if your concerns are not remedied by the facility or if you witness an instance of severe neglect or abuse. Report complaints and care problems to the State or local Long-term Care Ombudsman Program or the State survey agency so that they can investigate.