



# How to Solve Problems in an Assisted Living Facility

Despite the best efforts of the assisted living facility staff and administration, you may sometimes have trouble getting the quality care you need. If so, there are steps you can take to solve such issues. Below are some tips and resources to help you in these situations.

## Communication Tips

- **Ask open-ended questions**  
These are questions that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no.” These questions build rapport and help you get more information.
- **Listen**  
Restate in your own words what someone has said. This shows that you are truly listening and trying to understand the other party.
- **Say “we” whenever possible**  
By using “we,” you create a sense of teamwork and partnership between you and assisted living staff.
- **Write down any problems or incidents that occur**  
Be sure to include the date, time, person(s) involvement and what action(s) were taken following the incident.

## Steps You Can Take to Address an Issue

### Within the facility

- Consider asking a family member, friend or staff person you respect for help in resolving your issue.
- Speak with the staff person you were told to contact with any questions or concerns. If you do not know who that person is, start by speaking with the facility social worker if there is one, or ask whom the person is to contact.
- Talk to the staff person involved in the issue. If this does not address the problem, go to someone with more responsibility.  
Speak to:
  - A supervisor
  - The administrator of the facility
  - The person to whom the administrator reports
- Use the facility’s grievance policy.
  - Submit a written description of your problem or complaint to the facility. Include information about who is involved, what is happening, and when and where it is happening.
  - Keep a copy for your records.
- Ask for a care/service plan meeting.
  - Include family, friends and/or others who will advocate on your behalf.
  - Be sure that the person who can fix the problem is at that meeting.

- Take the concern to the resident council if there is one.
  - Some assisted living facilities have resident councils that take concerns about life in the facility to the administration. If a council exists at your facility, ask a staff member to connect you with the council president

### **Outside the facility**

If the assisted living facility is licensed:

- Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program  
Ombudsmen work to resolve complaints on behalf of long-term care residents; they can answer questions, give suggestions, offer assistance and support, or address issues you may have.
- State Licensing and Certification Agency  
This agency monitors or regulates licensed assisted living facilities. You can work to get your problem corrected by filing a complaint.
- Citizen Advocacy Group  
Citizen Advocacy Groups are concerned citizens who advocate on behalf of quality long-term services and supports in their locality, state or region.
- Legal Aid  
Many times problems come up over the contract you signed when you began living in the facility. If you think you need an attorney to help you with a disagreement over your contract, click here to view a list of legal aid offices where you might qualify for free legal services <http://www.ptla.org/legal-services-links>.

If your facility is unlicensed:

- Contact the long-term care ombudsman program, a citizen advocacy group, or legal aid.
  - Ask the ombudsman, citizen advocacy group, or legal aid for their suggestions about where you might turn for help in your state.

*To locate the State/Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman, State Licensing and Certification Agency, or Citizen Advocacy Group in your state, call the Consumer Voice at (202) 332-2275, toll free at (866) 992-3668 or go to [www.theconsumervoice.org](http://www.theconsumervoice.org) and click on “Locate an Ombudsman.”*

**No matter what, be persistent and don’t give up!**

### **Additional Resources**

- For more in-depth information on these and other related topics, see the *Piecing Together Quality Long-Term Care Guide* produced by the Consumer Voice <http://theconsumervoice.org/product/piecing-together-quality-long-term-care-a-consumers-guide-to-choices-and-advocacy>.