



## 6 Steps to Getting Quality Care in an Assisted Living Facility

The best way to achieve quality care is to work with the assisted living facility staff to meet your needs. Below are some ways in which you can actively participate in your care.

### 1. Be Informed

- Learn what your rights and the assisted living facility's responsibilities are.
  - If the facility is licensed, read the assisted living regulations posted by the state licensing and certification agency. Go to [http://theconsumervoice.org/get\\_help](http://theconsumervoice.org/get_help), choose your state and look for "Licensure and Certifications," or call the Consumer Voice at (202) 332-2275 to find the contact information for this agency.
  - In cases where the facility is not licensed, the contract is the only place in which the assisted living facility's responsibilities will be stated. If you do not have a copy of the contract, request it from the facility.
- Know what care and services you are supposed to receive. This information is in your care/service plan, so make sure to always have a copy of the most recent plan.
- Ask questions.

### 2. Create a Circle of Support

- Develop a group of family members, friends and other people you trust who can assist in advocating for the care you want.

### 3. Participate in Your Care/Service Plan

- Let the assisted living staff know that you want to be involved in reviewing or developing your care/service plan.
- Consider asking someone from your circle of support and/or the staff person who is most familiar with you and whom you trust to attend your care/service plan meetings with you.
- Make a list of questions, comments or concerns you have. Bring this list to the care/service plan meeting.
- Speak up at the meeting! Tell the staff what you want and need.
- Ask for a copy of the care/service plan after it has been created or revised.
- Ask that the care/service plan be changed if it is not working for you or if your condition changes.

### 4. Develop a Positive Relationship with Staff

- Talk to the facility about assigning the same staff to provide care and services to you.

- Get to know staff.
- Treat all staff with respect and appreciation.

## 5. Communication Tips

- Ask a question if something is unclear.
- State what you mean directly, respectfully and in language that is free of blame or judgment. Try to ask a question, not make an accusation.
- Make sure to thank staff for their help.
- If the assisted living staff tells you they cannot do something because the “state” or the “rules” do not allow it, ask them politely to show you the document where this information is written down. Ask for more information from your local ombudsman (see below).
- Keep notes. Write down any problems or incidents that occur. Be sure to include the date, time, person(s) involved, and what action(s) were taken by staff/administration. This information will help in communicating your concerns at a later date if problems continue.

## 6. Know where to turn with questions and concerns

- Find out which staff person to contact and how to reach them.
- Connect with the resident council if there is one. The council can help answer questions or communicate your concern to facility administration.
- If you would like free, unbiased advice, consider contacting:
  - State/Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman.  
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. Go to [http://theconsumervoice.org/get\\_help](http://theconsumervoice.org/get_help) to locate your state or local ombudsman or call the Consumer Voice at (202) 332-2275 or toll free at (866) 992-3668.
  - Citizen Advocacy Groups.  
These local or state organizations advocate for quality long-term care. Go to [http://theconsumervoice.org/get\\_help](http://theconsumervoice.org/get_help) and click on your state to connect with a representative from the citizen advocacy group in your area.

## 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>.