



MICHIGAN LONG TERM CARE  
OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

## Fact Sheet: **When a Nursing Home Closes**

### **Why Do Nursing Homes Close?**

A nursing home may make the decision to close voluntarily for a number of different reasons, but usually it is due to finances or a low number of residents in the building. The State may close the nursing home due to poor care or other issues. Regardless of the reason for the closure, the residents must move from the nursing home.

### **What Happens When A Nursing Home Closes?**

When a nursing home closes, a lot happens. First, the nursing home administrator must send a closure plan to the State for approval before telling residents the home is closing. The nursing home must give written notice including the approval plan to the nursing home residents and resident representatives. The nursing home should hold meetings to tell residents, families and resident representatives about the reasons for the closure and explain the nursing home's plan to help residents move. The home must follow its plan and provide care and services to residents until all residents find a new home.

### **How Soon Can A Nursing Home Close?**

If the nursing home decides to close (this is called a **voluntary** closure), the federal regulations require the home to give residents a 60-day notice before it closes. If the State determines the nursing home must close (this is called a **regulatory** closure), the residents are given a 30-day notice. The time it takes to close a nursing home is different for each nursing home depending on the number of residents, the needs of each resident, and the number of nursing home beds or community options in the area. Even though a 30 or 60 day notice is given, the nursing home cannot close until all residents are safely relocated.

## Important Things To Know

When a nursing home closes, residents need to know that:

- Residents' rights do not change because the nursing home is closing.
- It is normal to feel angry, sad, or disappointed that the nursing home is closing.
- Residents may **not** need to move to another nursing home. Residents may be able to move out of the nursing home and return to the community with supports and services. There are programs that offer the type of care provided in nursing homes to people living in private homes, apartments, or other community settings.
- Residents can consider relocating to any place in Michigan or in another state.
- Residents can have friends or family help decide where to move but each resident makes the final decision, unless the resident has a legal representative. Legal representatives including guardians should consider the wishes of the resident in making decisions about where the resident will live.
- Residents can ask to move to the same place as other residents to keep friends and roommates together.
- Medicaid residents **do not** need to reapply for Medicaid because the nursing home is closing.

## What Must The Nursing Home Do During A Closure?

The nursing home must continue to provide care and services to all residents as it did before the closure started. In addition to providing these services, the nursing home must also provide **person-centered discharge planning** for each resident by:

- Allowing the resident to make the decision about where to live.
- Sending referrals to homes or agencies of the resident's choice.
- Following-up on referrals and telling the resident the results of the referrals.
- Coordinating transportation to the resident's new home for the resident's preferred date and time.
- Encouraging family and friends to go with the resident when moving to the new home.
- Copying the clinical record and preparing a discharge plan to transfer with the resident.
- Helping the resident label, inventory and pack belongings, if the resident wants help.
- Sending the resident's medications, identification, insurance cards, and any other information or resident property held by the nursing home.
- Assisting the resident with personal hygiene and appropriate clothing for the move.
- Returning any resident trust fund money or balance of the Patient Pay Amount.

## During a Nursing Home Closure, Residents Have The Right To

- Receive a 30 or 60 day notice based on the type of nursing home closure.
- Be notified of a change in the closure time frame that could affect them.
- Actively participate in relocation and **person-centered** discharge planning meetings.
- Have a placement worker to help find a new place to live.
- Be fully informed of the options to live in the community with supports and services.
- Take time to decide where to live including waiting to see if a nursing home bed or community option becomes available within a reasonable period of time.
- Visit other nursing homes or community options to decide where to live.
- Have legal representation without fear of reprisal or retaliation.
- Receive adequate care and treatment delivered during the closure.
- Have trust fund and/or patient pay amount balances refunded, if applicable.
- Have personal items protected during the closure and transferred to the new home.
- Be treated with **respect** and **dignity** during the closure and after the move.
- Attend resident and family meetings about the closure.
- Continue going to activities and resident council meetings and events.

## How Does The Closure Affect Residents?

Hearing you have to move from your home can be very stressful for any person. Some residents may suffer from Relocation Stress Syndrome. Sometimes Relocation Stress Syndrome is also called “transfer trauma”. This stress can result in:

- Difficulty eating, bathing, grooming, or dressing,
- New or increased depression or confusion,
- Withdrawal from others,
- Increased risk of or actual falls, or
- Unplanned weight loss.

Relocation stress is real and can be minimized for many residents. To help minimize or avoid relocation stress, the resident should be supported by all staff, the placement worker, family members, and friends during the nursing home closure, the actual move, and at the new home. If a resident is at risk for or showing signs of Relocation Stress Syndrome, please talk with the placement worker or contact the Michigan Long Term Care Ombudsman Program.

## When To Contact A Long Term Care Ombudsman?

Local long term care ombudsmen are available to help residents with a variety of nursing home issues. There is no cost to residents or families for ombudsman services. During a nursing home closure, the local ombudsman is onsite more often to help residents to understand rights and relocation options and watch the relocation process. Residents and families can contact the ombudsman:

- When resident rights are not being honored.
- To get more information on other home or community options.
- To get support during a person-centered discharge planning meeting.
- If the nursing home is rushing residents to make decisions to move.
- If the nursing home is not following its plan to help residents move.
- To ask questions or share concerns about the relocation process.
- If the facility is not providing enough staff to provide proper care and services to residents during the closure.
- If there is a concern about Relocation Stress Syndrome.
- If the resident is unhappy or has concerns with the new home.
- If there are concerns about care, quality of life, payment, or eligibility issues.

## What Happens After the Move?

An ombudsman will visit residents who move to other Michigan licensed nursing homes, adult foster care homes, and homes for the aged. The ombudsman will check to see if the resident has concerns about the move or the care and services at the new home. Other agencies may visit residents to see how residents are doing after the move.

### Michigan Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

Free and Confidential Help

**1-866-485-9393**

Email: [MLTCOP@meji.org](mailto:MLTCOP@meji.org)

Website: [MLTCOP.org](http://MLTCOP.org)