

President, Carol J. Teal
Executive Director, Alice H. Hedt

1828 L Street, NW
Suite 801
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202.332.2275
Fax: 202.332.2949
www.nccnhr.org

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Dear Residents, Family Members, and Others Who Support Quality Long-Term Care:

The National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR) encourages everyone who is concerned about quality nursing home care to participate with us in the *Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes* Campaign. In June 2006, the NCCNHR Board made the decision to participate in this national effort after much thoughtful deliberation. **We believe that the campaign has the potential to bring national attention to serious problems in nursing home care that must be addressed. We also believe that the campaign provides opportunities to promote individualized care and to address specific clinical and workforce issues that can bring about real quality of care and quality of life for 1.5 million people who live in nursing homes.**

This campaign calls upon each nursing home in the country to choose targets and make progress on specific goals they elect, including reducing pain, pressure ulcers and restraint use; addressing staff turnover, implementing consistent assignment of nursing staff, setting clinical quality targets, and measuring resident and family satisfaction. While facility participation is voluntary, it is our hope that with this united effort, each nursing home will step up and focus on improvements that we know can benefit residents. Participating facilities will choose at least three measures but can choose to address all eight.

The organizations included in planning the campaign include provider associations, a foundation, nurses and physicians, a union, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and other groups involved in long-term care. The campaign also provides opportunities for individual consumers and organizations to participate on the local, state and national level. NCCNHR views the campaign as an opportunity to provide concrete information to consumers on each of the areas that are going to be measured. We also believe that having advocates and consumers encourage facility involvement in the campaign will encourage facility participation and attention to these serious issues.

Please know that our organization will make every effort to be a strong voice for residents throughout the campaign and will continue our traditional advocacy work in other arenas. NCCNHR's involvement has already resulted in campaign plans that will better address resident care, specifically the inclusion of two workforce measures. We believe that NCCNHR's participation will complement and not in any way restrict our other organizational efforts.

In recent conversations with some residents and family members, I have been asked whether I really think that this campaign warrants consumer involvement. My answer is “yes.”

- “Yes” because it provides the opportunity to bring national attention and dialogue to issues that need to be addressed.
- “Yes” because it includes a component that provides opportunities for consumers to give input during the campaign.
- “Yes” because for the first time two areas related to staffing will be tracked and analyzed at the national level – turnover and consistent assignment.
- “Yes” because it provides opportunities for regular, on-going dialogue between consumers, providers, CMS and other key stakeholders. Consumer involvement is essential as we seek to improve quality.

I encourage each one of you to go to the campaign website and sign up as a consumer participant. You will not receive any mail or e-mails unless you indicate that you would like feedback. By enrolling, you will be saying that you believe nursing home care can improve. You are saying, “Yes to Excellence.” NCCNHR also encourages you to:

- Visit the website at www.nhqualitycampaign.org and join the campaign as a *participating consumer* to learn more and to join others who EXPECT EXCELLENCE!
- Ask the nursing home(s) in your community if they are participating in *Advancing Excellence*. If not, encourage them to become involved.
- Talk to facility staff about what measures the nursing home will be addressing and how you as a consumer can support their efforts. Express your opinion about what measures the facility should address.
- **Encourage each facility to choose the two goals that are most closely linked to quality** – reducing staff turnover and increasing consistent assignment so that staff know the individual needs and preferences of each resident and so that important relationships can be developed.
- Hold discussions about *Advancing Excellence* in resident and family councils.
- Consider participating in community or statewide activities (Local Area Networks for Excellence, or LANES) to promote excellence in nursing homes.

NCCNHR believes that residents themselves, along with family members and advocates, can best define quality and provide essential information to facility staff about how their quality of life and quality of care can be improved. Please let us know about your involvement and ideas. Working together, we can improve the day-to-day lives of residents. Together, we can make a difference!

Very sincerely,



Alice H. Hedt