

How to Solve Problems in a Nursing Home

Despite efforts by facility staff and administration, you may sometimes have trouble getting the quality care you need in a nursing home. If so, there are steps you can take to solve such problems. 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. It shows you are truly listening and trying to understand the other person.
- **Say “we” whenever possible.** By saying “we,” this sends a message that you want to work with the facility to ensure quality care.
- **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 Solve a Problem

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 talking with the facility social worker, or ask who the person is to contact.
- Talk to the staff person involved in the issue. If this does not resolve 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. Pull from what you wrote down about problems (see “[Communication Tips](#)”).
 - Keep a copy for your records.
- Ask for a care 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 or family council.
 - Resident or family councils help resolve complaints before the initial problem becomes more serious and tensions arise between residents, family and administration. If a council exists at your facility, ask a staff member to connect you with the council president.

Outside the facility

- **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** In every state this agency monitors or regulates licensed nursing homes. 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.

To locate the State Ombudsman, Program representative, State Licensing and Certification Agency, or Citizen Advocacy Group in your state, go to https://theconsumervoice.org/get_help.

Additional Resources

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

