

**THE CHALLENGE OF ASSISTED LIVING**

**IDEAS**  
*for*  
**DIRECT CARE STAFF**



**ENCOURAGING  
INDEPENDENCE, CHOICE, CONTROL  
AND DECISION-MAKING**

The Long Term Care Community Coalition (LTCCC - formerly the Nursing Home Community Coalition)  
Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled (CIAD)

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## A VISION

We are excited by the mission and promise of assisted living: to allow people to have maximum independence and control over their lives and the ability to remain in place, even when they need more care.

However, this can be challenging and hard to accomplish. A three year study of assisted living in New York State we conducted identified the difficulties of fulfilling this promise. As a result, we began a national project to work with the assisted living industry to move closer to making these ideals a reality. In order to advance this vision, we have written educational materials for both consumers and assisted living providers. There are four different guides:

1. A guide for potential residents helps them choose an assisted living community where the goal of resident choice and decision-making power is a reality.
2. A guide, for people now in assisted living, helps them evaluate their residence in terms of this goal and suggests ways to work with staff and other residents to make it a reality.
3. A guide for assisted living managers looks at the obstacles that might prevent this goal and suggests ways to overcome them.
4. **This guide**, for assisted living staff who work directly with residents, helps the staff to make this goal a reality in the residents' everyday lives.

The purpose of these guides is to generate both discussion and action among consumers and providers about how to deal with any concerns raised and how to maximize choice, independence and the ability to remain in a residence as one becomes more dependent. We do not expect to see the promise of assisted living achieved overnight. It is a work in progress and a vision for the future.

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## INTRODUCTION

Most seniors who cannot live at home any longer choose an assisted living community because they believe it will help them remain independent. In addition, they believe they will be able to make decisions and have control over their everyday lives. Many communities promise that residents can stay if they become sicker. Seniors hope to find a place where they can continue to live, as much as possible, as if they were in their own home.

**You can make a difference.** If the elderly feel they are not in control of their lives, they may become hopeless, helpless and depressed. Also, when sick elderly are moved to another level of care they often become confused and even sicker.

**You do important work.** You are one of the most important persons in the resident's life. You can help the resident get what she wants and needs. By the way you care for the residents you can help them remain as independent as possible. You can help them have control over their everyday life. You can make sure they can do, as much as possible, what they want to do. Because you are well-informed, you can help deal with problems that might send them to a nursing home if not treated. But, these things are not always easy to do.

**We know that you are very busy. You do many things at once. You are always on the move.** You may not be sure how to do all of this. You may not be sure you have the time.

**This guide will help you.** It has lists of ideas that we believe will make it easier for you to do your job and meet these resident needs.

**You will see "Cases."** These are things that other caregivers have done. We ask you to think about whether these are things you could do. **You will see "Scenarios."** These are made up. We ask you to discuss these with other staff and management.

Many of the ideas will work for residents with physical problems and those who are beginning to have dementia or Alzheimer's. You will find a special section of the guide for those who have more advanced dementia.

Some of you may already do many of the suggestions in this guide. However, we hope there will be some new ideas for you. **Some points to remember:**

- Not every idea will work for you.
- Select those you believe will work for you and the residents.
- We do not expect you to read this guide in one sitting.
- We hope it will be used as a reference, a booklet to go back to over time, looking for ideas.

We know that you cannot do this alone. We have also written a guide for management with ideas for them. Many of those ideas relate to ways management can make it possible for you to carry out some of the things in this guide. We are recommending that managers work with you, the residents and the families as they work through the ideas in their guide and your guide. We hope that you will feel free to discuss the thoughts in this guide with management. **Good luck and thank you for your dedication.**



## CHOICE AND CONTROL

### What Does Choice and Control Mean To You?

For this exercise you will need a pencil and paper. On the paper, please list those things that you are able to decide for yourself each day. For example, do you decide when to go to sleep? If so, put that down on your list. You might put the following things on your list: bedtime, what to eat, when to eat, who to eat with, when to bathe, whether to take a shower or a bath, what to wear, whether to stay in bed all day on a day off, where to live, activities you want to do such as go to a movie or shopping or read a book, go out with friends or be by yourself, and many, many more.

- If you could not make these decisions – if other people made them for you – how would you feel?

### How Much Choice and Control Do The Residents Have in Your Assisted Living Community?

Look at the list of everyday decisions you make again. How many of those decisions can or do **the residents** make?

- Can they decide when to get up and when to go to bed?
- Can they decide to go for a walk when they want to?
- Can they decide to take a bath rather than a shower and when to take it?
- Can they control the temperature in their room or apartment?
- Can they use their own furniture and arrange it in any way they like?
- Can they have a pet if they want to?
- Can they choose what to eat at each meal, when to eat and who to eat with?
- Do they have a place to cook if they want to?
- Do they have a place to entertain family and friends?
- Can they go somewhere whenever they want to go?

There may be many reasons why the residents in your community do not have the freedom to make the same decisions you do. A resident with dementia may not be able to go out whenever she wants to. A resident in an assisted living residence with rooms that do not have separate temperature controls may not be able to control the temperature in her room. However, there are many things that all residents can and should have control over in any residence.

Look at your list of things you decide each day. Think about the residents and put a check next to those items on your list that you believe the residents **should** or **could** have free choice about. If you feel the residents don't have some choices that they should, don't worry about whether or not it seems possible right now. Indicate which decisions you think they should be able to make. What decisions would you want to make if you were an assisted living resident?

## What Might Stand in the Way of Resident Choice and Control in Your Assisted Living Community?

You are working here because you like caring for the elderly. You want to help them do what they want to do.

Yet there may be some things that may stand in the way and make your job even harder than it is.

- Staff shortages can mean there is less time to help residents make choices.
  - A resident may want to go to an activity outside the residence, but there is no extra staff to take her.
  - A resident may want to stay asleep until 10 AM. You may have so many residents to help get dressed, that you feel you do not have the time to come back later.
- The resident's family may not want the resident to make his or her own decisions. You might feel like you are in the middle. Who should you listen to?
- Some residents may not speak English and you may not understand them.
- Because your job is so difficult sometimes you might limit freedom because it seems to make things easier for you. For example, some residents may need help with eating. It may be easier for you to group residents together for meals, rather than give them the choice of where to sit.

## Ways to Encourage Resident Choice and Control and Make Your Life Easier

You can make a difference. How you do your job can encourage more resident choice and control. It can also make your job easier.

***“We work around their schedule. It is not about us. We are here from 7 to 3:30. They live here 24/7. If we knock on their door and say, bath time and the resident says, ‘I don’t want to take a bath.’ Do you want to take it later? Okay, later. We have no problem. We come back later.”***

***– Resident care assistant***

You may be thinking: **“Right. How can I help residents have choices and control? I am too busy. I have to take care of many residents. It is impossible.”**



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Below are ideas that will help you encourage resident choice and decision-making.  
Many will **also make things easier for you.**

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- **Get to know the resident.** You will be able to help residents lead the life they want to lead. You can do this by speaking to your residents about what their life has been like. You get to know their likes and dislikes. You get to know what routines they have followed. You will be able to help them keep these routines.
  - **Getting to know residents well will help you.** Some residents, angry at being unable to live at home, may take it out on you. The more you speak to the residents, the more they will see you as a person. They will be less likely to take their dissatisfactions out on you. Some of the reasons that residents complain or get angry may be because they are frustrated. They are frustrated because they cannot do what they want to do. By making this possible for them, you may find that they will act differently.
  
- **Encourage the resident to tell you how best to care for him.** Often, the resident knows the best and easiest way to be cared for. Develop a partnership with the resident. Ask him about how he would like his care given.
  - He may know the best way to be bathed so he is not in pain.
  - She may know that it is easier if her left arm is put into the sleeve first.

**This will make the task easier and will take less time to care for the resident.**

Read the “scenario” or situation discussed below. Would you have done this?

### *Scenario*

You begin to help a new resident put on his pants. You help him put his right foot in and then pick up his left foot. He pulls back and says, “That hurts. It is better if you put my left foot in first.” You listen and you and the resident find dressing easy, quick and painless.



**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

- **Encourage residents to choose their daily routine.**
  - If a resident does not want to get up early and needs your help to dress, give her time by taking care of other residents first who do not mind getting up early.
  - If a resident wants to take his bath in the evening, help work out such a schedule by trying to switch other jobs from evening to daytime. Work with other caregivers to make this happen.

### Scenario

You take care of 15 residents. Some need a lot of help getting ready for the day. Others need less time. You meet with each resident and tell them that you want to develop a schedule with them. You ask them when they would like you to come in to help them. You ask them if they have any activities they need to get to. You work out a schedule that comes very close to what each resident wants. For those that need little help, you ask them to choose their clothes at night. That saves you time in the morning. You go first to those residents who want to get up early. The other resident can sleep.

**COULD YOU DO THIS?**

### Scenario

A resident who needs help bathing wanted to skip her bath or take it later. An activity she wanted to go to was at the same time as her bath. You and the resident work out a schedule that works for both of you. By moving things around, you are able to bathe her close to the end of your shift.



**COULD YOU DO THIS?**

Here too, you will benefit. You are making the resident feel more in control. And a resident who can keep a schedule they have had for many years is a happy resident. She will be less likely to become frustrated and take things out on you. If you need help in arranging this, discuss how to do this with your supervisor or management.

- **Encourage residents to choose things for themselves.**
  - If you are helping a resident dress, go to the closet and ask the resident to choose what they want to wear. If you are too busy in the morning, try to set this up with the evening resident care assistant the night before.
  - Encourage the resident to decide what types of activities they want to be involved in and help them get to them.

- **If your residence has a resident council, encourage the residents to join.** Assist them, if they need help, in getting to meetings.
- **Help families understand that the resident (who is capable) has the right to decide things for themselves.** You cannot do this by yourself. Management has to first work with families to help them understand this. As you work with families who insist on making decisions for the resident, explain to them that this is not good for their relative. The family may think they are protecting their loved one. However, you know that by doing this they may be causing their relative to become depressed. They may become more dependent unnecessarily. In addition, if your state has regulations that require you to listen to the capable resident over family, let the family know this. If you are having any problems with this, let your supervisor know.

### Case

Residents in one residence decided to show staff how often the staff tended not to listen to the residents.



They taped a number of role-plays where they played the parts of resident and staff. In one, they showed a resident, acting as a direct care worker, helping a resident dress. The tape, which was used in staff training, shows the resident care assistant (role-played by a resident) putting on a shirt as the resident says, "I don't want that shirt. I want the blue one." The resident care assistant continues to dress him, acting as if she did not hear. The staff were very surprised. They did not realize they were doing this.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

- **Make management aware of any resident who speaks a language no one understands.** If the resident cannot make herself understood, speak to management to discuss how to deal with this issue.



## INDEPENDENCE

### What Does Independence

### Mean To You?

Pick up your pencil and paper again. Write down things you can do for yourself. Think about your workday and days off. Think about what you do in the morning, daytime and at night. Do you shower or use the bathroom by yourself? Cook? Drive yourself to work? If so, put them down on your list. Put down all of the things that you can do without the help of others. If you needed help to do some of the things on your list, how would you feel?

*"[I think about] life losses. Even if I have no place to go, if my car is not outside in the driveway, I'm crazy...So, with a lot of people [here], you hear the same story: 'I was down in Florida...[now] my condo is gone' and about all the wonderful times they had down there [when they had] a car...Not having their car and the freedom to go shopping and just pick up and go whenever you please...It is a loss for them. "*

*– Resident care assistant*

## How Independent Are The Residents in Your Assisted Living Community?

Look at your list of things you can do by yourself. What things do you help residents with? Do you help them walk? Go to the bathroom? Bathe? Dress? Because of poor health, some residents may be dependent on you for many things. Is it possible to help them be more independent in some things? What could you safely do to encourage resident independence?



## What Might Stand in the Way of Resident Independence?

- Encouraging residents to be as independent as possible may be limited by a desire not to make things too difficult for yourself.
  - It may be easier to brush a resident's teeth than take the time to help the resident do it himself.
  - It may be easier to give someone a bath or shower than to arrange things so the resident can wash herself with assistance.

**However, taking the time in the beginning will save time later.** Giving residents time to do things themselves may take time in the beginning, but in the end, they will be doing things that you would have had to do.

- Family members may not want their relative to be as independent as you believe they could because they are so concerned for their relative's safety.
  - Are you concerned about following their wishes?
- Some residents may be afraid of doing things you believe they could do safely.
- Residents who do not speak English may find it hard to communicate and understand.

### *Case*

In one community, some residents who saw that people who needed help were getting more attention from the staff asked for help they did not need. The caregiver knew that they wanted some attention. She found time to give these residents attention by sitting with them and speaking to them. They stopped asking for help they did not need.



**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

## Ways to Encourage Resident Independence

We know that many residents have physical problems or dementia. Many of them depend on you because of this. However, you are in a position to help these residents be even more independent than they would have been if they remained at home.

**Important Note:** *You need to find out from supervisory staff how independent the residents can safely be in different areas such as: dressing, bathing, eating, walking, etc. Then you can work on ways to encourage them to be as independent as they can be.*

***“When we keep residents feeling more independent, they are less aggravated.”***

***– Resident care assistant***

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We know you work hard every day. You probably go home exhausted. How can you encourage independence? It may take less time to do things for the resident rather than wait while they do it themselves. Look at the ideas below. You may find that helping residents to live as independently as possible will make your job easier as well as help the resident.

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- **Encourage the resident to do it himself.**
  
- **Make sure the resident has what he needs to be as independent as possible.**
  - Keep walkers, canes and wheelchairs ready to be used. **If these are not available, the resident will have to call for help.**
  - Make sure that any devices the resident needs to eat are at her side. **If these are not available, the resident will be unable to feed herself and will need you by her side.**
  
- **Support the resident who is afraid.** If you know that a resident can safely walk by himself for a short distance, or can safely wash himself once in the shower, but is afraid, reassure him that you will be with him if he needs help. Encourage him to try it for himself.
  
- **Encourage families to support the resident's independence.** Help families understand that if residents do not do things for themselves wherever they can, they will quickly become more dependent. Make the family feel comfortable by asking a supervisor to explain that it is safe for their relative to be independent.



## RISK-TAKING

Having the right to take risks is a difficult issue. You want to help people and keep them safe. You do not want them to harm themselves. However, you know how you would feel if you were not allowed to do something you wanted to do.

### Do You Ever Take Risks?

Do you ever do things someone else might consider dangerous? Like what? Put these things down on paper. Be honest, now. Do you smoke? Sit in the sun for too long at the beach? Eat more than you should? Do you sometimes drive fast? Do you go on adventurous trips? Look at your list. For each item, answer the following questions:

- What happens when you do these things? Do you know what could happen?
- Do you do them anyway? Why?
- If they are dangerous, how do you feel when someone tells you you shouldn't be doing some of these things or refuses to let you do them?

### **Do The Residents Ever Take Risks?**

What kinds of things do the residents do or want to do that you consider unsafe? Make a list.

- Do they want to go outside whenever they want to, even when you think it is too cold?
- Do they want to smoke?
- Do they want to go shopping on their own even though you feel they need help?
- Do they sometimes want to eat fattening, salty or sugary foods when they are obese, have heart problems or are diabetic?
- Do they want to go for a walk, even though you feel they are too weak?

Do the residents agree that the action is unsafe? If it really is dangerous, why do you think the residents might want to do it anyway?

If the residents are not permitted to do things you consider unsafe, how do you think they feel?

### **An Environment Where Residents Can Do Things You May Consider Unsafe**

Only management, with the resident (and family, if the resident is not capable) can make decisions in this area. They must first decide if the resident can understand what may happen if he takes a risk. They also are the ones who must decide if the action is dangerous. Then they must decide what to do if it is dangerous.

However, you play an important part in this area. You know the resident the best. You know how important it is to the resident to do what he wants to do. You probably know how well he is able to understand.

- Your role is to bring these issues to the management.
- You should also go to management when you have problems.
- You should attend any service plan meeting where risk-taking is discussed so you can let others know what you know about the resident.

#### *Scenario*

A weak resident wants to go to the store along a busy highway. You tell him that you think it is dangerous. He is very upset and wants to go. You go to your supervisor and ask what you should do. She knows that the resident is able to understand what may happen. She suggests that you ask if you can go with him. You ask the resident, he says yes.



#### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**



## **PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING IN THE ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY**

### **How Much Do You Participate in Your Community?**

What decisions do you make about your community? Do you vote? Are you on a tenant board? Are you a member of the PTA? Perhaps as a member of the PTA you help develop activities for your child's school. You might fight for more traffic lights or less noise in your community as a member of a community group. These decisions, although not about your everyday routines, may have a major effect on your life. Lessening noise may help you sleep. More traffic lights may keep you and your family safe.

- How would you feel if you could not have a say in any of these things?
- How would you feel if others decided these things for you?

### **How Much Do the Residents Participate in Decision-Making in Their Community?**

The residents are a part of their community in the same way that you are a part of yours. What decisions do they help make about the assisted living community in which they live? Do they bring any suggestions and concerns about policies to you for consideration?

- If you have a Resident Council, does it participate in decisions made by the residence or does it merely raise problems?
- Does it participate in choosing decorations for the residence?
- Does it participate in deciding meal times or the selection of food served?
- Does it participate in staff training?
- Does it or individual residents help interview and choose staff?

### **What Might Stand In The Way Of Resident Participation in Decision-Making?**

- It may be difficult to help residents become decision makers and/or advisors – either individually or through a resident council. Some individuals have not had a lot of experience with decision-making in their lives.
- Some residents may not seem interested in participating.

#### *Scenario*

A resident is always complaining about the food. You know that a small committee of residents has been set



up to work on improving the food served in the residence. You ask the resident if she would like to join the committee. She says she does not want to. She feels that no one would listen to her. You tell her that her opinions are important and that she should join. You tell her that you can help her get to the meetings if she needs help. You also tell her that you can introduce her to the other residents if she feels uncomfortable.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

## Ways to Encourage Resident Participation in Decision-Making

You are in a wonderful position to help residents participate in their community. Many residents will turn to you for encouragement that they can do it. Here are some ways:

- Encourage residents to become active in the resident council if there is one.
- Help the resident council in its work, if asked.
- Help residents participate on small committees that will make decisions if management has set these up. For example, develop a schedule with a resident to make sure that she can make the meeting times.
- If a resident has an idea about making changes in the residence, encourage him to share the idea with management and/or the resident council.
- If you know of any resident that you think would want to join a committee working on residence issues (such as staff training or menus or decoration), encourage her to join. Recommend her to the council.



### PARTICIPATION IN THE OUTSIDE COMMUNITY

Think about ways in which you are part of your neighborhood or community. Do you enjoy dining out or going out with others? Do you go to temple, church, mosque or synagogue? Do you go to the store or a beauty salon or barbershop?

Do you go to the movies?

- How would you feel if you rarely left your house?

The residents are a part of their community in the same way you are a part of your community. What kinds of things do the residents do in the outside community?

- Do they go to temple, church, mosque or synagogue?
- Do they go to the movies?
- Do they go shopping?

Would you want to do these things if you lived here? What community relationships or activities would you want to continue if you lived here?

#### *Scenario*

You try to get the residents to go outside on a trip. Few are willing to go. When you ask why they don't want to go, they say that there is no reason. However, you think they look fearful. You investigate a little and find out that they are afraid they will get too tired. You reassure them that you will be there and will help them find a seat if they need one. You develop the trip around a number of places where the residents can sit if necessary.



**COULD YOU DO THIS?**

## What Might Stand In The Way Of Resident Participation in The Outside Community?

- You may be afraid that weak residents will get hurt if they leave the residence.
- It may seem too difficult to arrange for them to go out.
- It may seem too expensive to management. The residence may need staff to go along or may need to supply transportation and this may be expensive.
- Residents don't seem to be interested or seem afraid to go out.

## Ways to Encourage Resident Participation in the Outside Community

- Encourage your residents to go into the outside community. Talk about your experiences in the "outside world."



### RESIDENTS WITH DEMENTIA OR ALZHEIMERS<sup>1</sup>

For many of the residents who are at the beginning stage of dementia, the ideas listed above will work. For others, some changes will need to be made.

- Let residents wander if they want to, don't tell them to sit down. Develop ways for them to wander safely.
- Structure a small group activities program to help keep these residents busy and interested.
- Don't tell them they can't poke around in different things. Set up a situation where they can look through things without disturbing others.

### Case

A few residents come to you to complain that another resident keeps coming into their room at night. She just stands and looks through the window. They are woken up. The caregiver looked at all the information he had about the resident. He finds that she used to be an astronomer. The caregiver figures out that she must be looking at the stars. He speaks to management and asks them if they could buy an inexpensive telescope. They agree. He sets the resident up with the telescope at a window near where he will be at night. She is very happy looking at the stars. She stops disturbing others.



### COULD YOU DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS?

### Case

It was snowing very hard. A resident with Alzheimer's wanted to go outside. The resident care assistant asked her to wait until it stopped snowing. She refused. She said she wanted to get fresh air. The resident care assistant figured out a way to help the resident do what she wanted safely. She asked her to get her jacket, gloves and boots. The resident care assistant took her out to a wrap-around porch. The resident stood there, saw the snow and got her fresh air. The resident care assistant said, "I was able to let her do what she wanted to do in a safe way. It makes you feels good."

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

<sup>1</sup> Based on an interview with Della Frazier-Rios, Director, Education and Training, NYC Chapter Alzheimer's Association.

### Case

A caregiver comes over to a resident and says that it is time for her shower. She gets very upset and starts to yell.



The caregiver leaves and does something else for a half hour and then comes back. The resident is still not ready. She starts to get upset again. The caregiver comes back a half hour later and the resident is ready. The caregiver is happy that the resident made the decision herself. She realizes that it is better to wait until this resident is ready than to waste time forcing her. The resident is happy as well.

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

### Case

Some of the female Alzheimer residents still carried handbags even if they are not going anywhere. In



one residence, a caregiver saw some of the women carrying heavy pocketbooks and urged them to put them down. Another caregiver told the first one to let them be. "It is important to them to feel that they are doing things they have always done."

#### DO YOU AGREE?

- Have healthful snacks available so they can help themselves.

**You might find that you help these residents feel contented. You might find that your job has become faster and easier.**

- Set things up. Give support. Coach.

Many demented and Alzheimer's residents can be independent if you help them. However, you will need to help by setting things up, giving support and coaching.

Many cognitively impaired residents wander, explore and like to poke through different items. Rather than try to stop this behavior, encourage their independence. Find ways that they can do the things they want. **You will find that it will be easier for you to allow them to do what they want than to try to stop them.**

- Encourage residents to make decisions about their everyday life by learning as much as you can about their choices of times for getting up, going to sleep, etc.
  - Speak to families and friends.
  - Observe the resident.
  - If you set a time for personal care and find that the resident is not ready, back off and come back later. **Your work will be much easier and faster if you are not fighting the resident as you care for her.**
- Encourage residents to maintain their identity. See 2nd & 3rd cases on next page.
- Limit choices to two.
  - Rather than ask the resident what she wants to eat, as you might with those who are capable, ask her if she wants chicken or fish (choosing two types of food that you know she likes).

### Case

A confused resident who used to be a nurse keeps picking up the phone on the floor when it rings and acts as if she is taking doctors' orders. People are getting upset because they do not want her on the phone for the residence. The caregiver arranges for another telephone where she can pretend to talk all she wants.



**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

- To encourage independent eating, you may need to actually get the eating motion started by starting the feeding.
- You may need to put the toothpaste on the brush and start the brushing motion before the resident will take over.

**Although this may take more time in the beginning, it will save you time in the future.**



## REMAINING IN PLACE IF ONE GROWS MORE DEPENDENT

### How Do You Feel When You Have to Move?

If you became sick, would you want to move out of your home? If you moved into a residence such as the one where you work, would you want to move again if you became even sicker? Think about when, in your life, you had to move.

- Was moving to a new place an easy thing to do?
- What were some of the problems you found? Making new friends? Adjusting to a new place and new routines? Going to a new school? Finding new places to shop?

### How Do You Think the Residents Feel About Moving?

- Think about new residents who come to the residence. What kinds of problems have they had getting used to their new home?
- Are the residents able to remain in this residence, if they want to, no matter how dependent they may become?
- If they have to move, how do you think they feel about it?
- Why would they want to stay?

### *Scenario*

A few of the residents are in wheelchairs. They want to go to an activity. You go early and make sure that room is left for them to sit comfortably without disturbing others. You also make sure that they have enough room to enter and leave without disturbing anyone.



#### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

### **What Might Stand in the Way of Residents Remaining If They Become More Dependent?**

Most individuals would prefer to remain in the residence even if their health gets worse. When they move, they lose important support like the friends they have made and staff like you. And, when sick elderly move from place to place, they may become confused and even sicker. The following are some possible reasons a residence may not permit such individuals to stay.

- The more independent residents (and/or their families) may not want to be with residents who are becoming more dependent physically or mentally.
- Management may not want the residence to “look like a nursing home.”
- Management may not feel you can care for residents that are more dependent.
- Management may feel that state regulations will not allow these residents to stay.

### **Ways to Develop a Community Where Residents Can Remain Even if They Grow More Dependent**

In order to limit the objections independent residents may have and to keep the home from looking like a “nursing home,” you could:

- Be prepared to help deal with conflicts between independent residents and those with mental or physical problems by being ready to get involved if necessary. For example:
  - Help to quiet down a resident with dementia.
  - Clean up a urinary accident quickly.
- Be prepared to help a mentally or physically dependent resident take an active part in activities without affecting the quality of life of the less impaired residents. For example:
  - Make sure that a resident in a wheelchair has plenty of room to move around.

### *Scenario*

You notice that one of the incontinent residents is moving around in an unusual way. You know that this is the time she usually is taken to the bathroom. You quietly enter the room where the activity is taking place and ask if she wants to go to the bathroom.



#### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

- Make sure that an Alzheimer's resident joining other residents comes to only the right kind of activities at times good for them. They will disturb others if they come at a time when they are upset. They will disturb others if they come to an activity that they cannot do or understand.

This will help you as well. Residents who are more restless later in the day will make your work much harder if they are involved with activities with independent residents; you will need to quiet them down or help them leave.

- Anticipate possible outcomes.
  - If one of the residents has urinary accidents, remind or take her to the bathroom before joining others.

**This may help you as well. You may be less likely to have to clean up an accident.**

Thank you for thinking about these ideas. We hope that they will help you to improve your residence and better allow residents to maintain as high a quality of life as possible. We hope they will help make your job easier and happier. We commend you for wanting to enhance the experiences of the residents. The authors welcome any other ideas that you may think of, or have already tried. Please share your ideas with us. We look forward to it.



# LTCCC

**LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION**  
*Working to improve long term care through research, education & advocacy*

THE LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION (LTCCC) is a New York statewide coalition of consumer, professional and civic groups that work to improve the quality of care and life for residents of nursing homes and assisted living residences. LTCCC has produced a number of studies on nursing homes and assisted living and has written and distributed educational materials, including a video, for consumers and providers.

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THE COALITION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED AGED AND DISABLED (CIAD) is a non-profit, consumer led organization of adult home and nursing home residents and residents' councils. CIAD provides residents with the information and skills they need to advocate for themselves, and works to improve the quality of their lives and their care. CIAD organizes residents into resident councils, educates residents about their rights, and promotes their participation in the affairs of their own residences as well as broader policy issues.

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