QUESTION: Which states have skilled nursing facilities or nursing facilities for prison inmates?

RESPONSES: Many state corrections departments are developing new facilities to care for elder inmates who need more specialized care. According to an article in the Corrections Connection Network (www.corrections.com), Indiana, Pennsylvania and Ohio have been first to develop special needs facilities for inmates needing increased medical assistance because of disabilities and frail health.

The following provides information on the different approaches taken by state departments of corrections to address the changing health needs of the growing aging prison population.

Arizona: Arizona does not have a designated unit for inmates; however, there are programs and housing for prisoners who are older and infirm. For more information contact: Cathie Hannon, State Long Term Care Ombudsman, 602/542-4446, channen@mail.de.state.az.us.

Colorado: Rep. Gloria Leyba (D-Denver County) has proposed that the Colorado Board of Parole release inmates who are 65 and older who are unable to care for themselves, the terminally ill, physically disabled and the developmentally disabled and the mentally ill into the care of families, halfway house or nursing homes. In order to avoid endangering the public, prisoners convicted of serious felonies, violent crimes, and sexual offenses would be excluded by this proposed law.

Illinois: Last year, the Illinois Legislature introduced a bill that would allow the Illinois Department of Corrections to design and build new nursing home facilities for prison inmates. The Governor vetoed the bill. This year, a private nursing home entity applied for a Certificate of Need to build a nursing home facility that would accommodate both elderly prison inmates as well as the general public. The Certificate of Need, which was accompanied by a letter of support from the Indiana Department of Corrections, was granted in
November 1999. It is suspected that the Department of Correction supports this new approach because the state may allow Medicaid to cover nursing home costs for the prison inmates at this new nursing home facility. As expected, consumer advocates are in opposition because of the security threat to the general public. Already there are two cases reported of prison inmates being paroled and transferred to nursing home facilities that accommodate the general public.

Indiana: A new corrections facility will open in December 2001 to serve inmates who need specialized health care. The facility will separate inmates by their offense and health care needs. Units will be created for sex offenders and substance abusers as well as for inmates with serious mental illnesses. A unit will also be created for geriatric and disabled inmates that will be wheelchair accessible and include exam rooms and singles cells for inmates with special medical needs. The facility will be a medium security area except for the mental health unit, which will be a maximum security area. For more information contact: Marty McHatton, Project Manager for the Indiana Department of Correction’s prison design division, 317/232-5776 or see Corrections Connection Network at www.corrections.com.

Kentucky: Kentucky is building a skilled nursing facility within the prison system for maximum-security prisoners. There has also been discussion in moving older and frail inmates to a Veterans Hospital in Lexington. For more information contact: Kathy Gannoe, Long Term Ombudsman, 502/564-6930, ombuddy1@aol.com or Gary Hammonds, Office on Alzheimer’s and Related Disorder, Cabinet for Human Resources, 502/564-6930, gary.hammonds@mail.state.ky.us.

Missouri: Missouri does have a "long term care unit" in the state's maximum security prison. Carol Scott, the State Long Term Care Ombudsman, attended an U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections training on the subject of older inmates and nursing homes for prisoners in June 1993. She has a notebook of information and is willing to share it with other Ombudsmen. She remembers that the North Carolina system was used as a model. For more information contact: Carol Scott, State Long Term Care Ombudsman, 1800/309-3282, cscott@mail.state.mo.us.

Montana: Montana does not have any programs designed to serve the aging prison population. For more information contact:
Inmate Access to Care

Robin Homan, State Long Term Care Ombudsman, 406/444-4077, rhomans@state.mt.us.

Nebraska: Nebraska has two facilities for inmates that are licensed as nursing facilities. The facilities are administered by the Department of Corrections Services. For more information contact: Cindy Kadavy, State Long Term Care Ombudsman, 402/471-2306, ckadavy@age1.ndoa.state.ne.us.

Ohio Ohio has turned to private providers to serve the prison system's special needs population. The state now allows inmates to be treated in a Northwest substance abuse facility, which was originally designed to treat multiple and chronic drunk drivers. For more information go to the Corrections Connection Network at www.corrections.com.

Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania has designed a new corrections facility to serve the specific needs of long-term, geriatric and disabled inmates. The design of the Pennsylvania facility was modeled after a nursing home. For more information contact Michael Lukens, Press Secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections at 717/975-4862 or see the Corrections Connection Network at www.corrections.com or try www.cor.state.ps.us/oldinma.html.

South Dakota: South Dakota will periodically have an older prisoner, who has his sentence reduced, admitted to a regular nursing home, because it has been determined that his health care needs outweigh the incarceration. For more information contact: Jeff Askew, State Long Term Care Ombudsman, 605/773-3656, jeffa@dss.state.sd.us.

Tennessee: Tennessee does not report any special programs or facilities for elder and infirm prison inmates. For more information contact: Adrian Wheeler, State Long Term Care Ombudsman, 615/741-2056, awheeler@mail.state.tn.us.

Virginia: There are no corrections facilities in Virginia with licensed and/or certified nursing home beds. For more information contact: Mark Miller, State Long Term Care Ombudsman, 804/644-2923, elderights@aol.com.

Wisconsin: The State's Department of Corrections is currently in the process of developing a geriatric corrections facility but no one is sure whether the facility will meet the legal definition of a nursing home. The State Ombudsman office also reports that on occasion, prisoners are transferred to skilled nursing facilities not associated with the prison system. For
more information contact: Bill Donaldson, Counsel of the Wisconsin Board on Aging and Long Term Care, 608/267-9436, bill.donaldson@ltc.state.wi.us.

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For more information contact the National Long Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center, at (202) 332-2275 or ombudcenter@nccnhr.org