
NEWS RELEASE



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Ombudsman Program Provides Tips for Visiting Friends and Relatives in Nursing Homes

The holidays are approaching, and many residents in long-term care facilities will begin to eagerly await a visit from an out-of-town friend or family member, or a special time with a regular visitor. Visitors should plan ahead to make these visits rewarding for both the resident and themselves, said Carol Scott, Missouri State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Scott said Missourians should consider the following suggestions when visiting a loved one in a long-term care facility.

- Most nursing facilities have specified visiting hours that extend for 10-12 hours. If your schedule does not permit you to visit during regular hours, discuss the situation with the resident and nursing facility social worker or administrator.
- Call ahead of your visit to inquire if the resident has any needs, such as personal items, clothing or other necessities.
- Arrange a time when the visit will be mutually satisfying.
- Children of all ages are generally welcomed in a nursing facility. Young children rarely react negatively to nursing home residents. Teenagers and older children may need some time to adjust.
- Inquire about pet visits and limitations.
- If the person you will be visiting is in a specialized unit, there may be different visiting hours and regulations to follow. Visits where you will take the resident outside of the facility are always encouraged, when possible, though there must be planning and coordination with the resident and staff. Always consider including the resident in holiday meals at home, and other outings.
- If you are visiting a relative or friend for the first time, understand that this will be an emotional visit. You will need to give yourself time to become acclimated to the new surroundings. Get to know the staff, other residents and their visitors.
- Most visitors initially experience mixed feelings. These feelings typically include feeling nervous, guilty, or angry. The person you visit may have many complaints. The overall environment may feel uncomfortable. Seek support and advice from the social service staff or administration.

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“It is always important to be supportive of the resident and his/her decisions as much as possible,” said Scott. “Visitors should consider engaging in activities that are stimulating to the resident such as reminiscing about the past or working on a stamp collection.” Other suggestions include:

- Attend an activity with the resident
- Take a walk - inside or outside
- Watch a favorite TV show
- Read to the resident, play an instrument or sing songs
- Reminisce or work on a photo album
- Talk about current events and what is going on with the family
- Help the resident organize (or reorganize) personal items in the room, and closets
- Mend items
- Work on a craft
- Seek advice on family matters
- Write letters or cards together

If you should discover a problem with the facility, or the resident you are visiting, notify the nursing facility’s administrator, director of nursing, or social worker first.

“If you continue to find that you need additional assistance in solving a problem within the facility, contact the Missouri State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office at 1-800-309-3282, for help advocating for the resident’s rights,” added Scott.

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- For information on inspection results for long-term care facilities go to Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services www.dhss.state.mo.us/showmelongtercare/ Show Me Long-Term Care.
 - For more information about long-term care go to www.medicare.gov, the Official U.S. Government Medicare Site, and click on Nursing Home Compare.
 - Or www.nccnhr.com National Citizens Coalition for Nursing Home Reform.

Resources for this news release:

- Indiana State Department of Health WWW *How to Choose a Nursing Home*. Retrieved October 27, 2003, from <http://www.ihca.org/info/Public/hcnh.htm>
- National Citizens’ Coalition for Nursing Home Reform WWW *Abuse and Neglect*. Retrieved October 27, 2003, from http://nccnhr.org.public/50_156_450.cfm