

Advocate For Quality Care

This resource highlights indicators of care to help you identify quality care and provides steps to address any areas of concern.



Residents

Share this with your peers, both individually and in Resident Council meetings, talk about what quality care means to you, and how to advocate for your needs.



Family Members

Use this resource to inform your observations during visits with your loved one and to advocate for quality care.

All residents have the right to quality care and to be free from mistreatment.

Quality Care

- Is individualized to meet the care needs and preferences of each resident.
- Improves, or maintains, the highest practicable well-being of each resident.
- Promotes resident dignity, choice, and self-determination in all aspects of life and care.



For help with your concerns you can:

- Talk to the **facility administrator, social worker, or staff person.**
- Contact the **Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) Program.** LTCO are advocates for residents in long-term care facilities.
- Contact your **state licensing and certification agency.** Each state has an agency responsible for the licensing, certification, and regulation of long-term care facilities and investigations of complaints.
- Contact **Adult Protective Services (APS).** APS investigates reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of elders and, in many states, individuals with disabilities.
- Contact **local law enforcement.** Mistreatment with willful intent could be a crime.



The National
CONSUMER VOICE
for Quality Long-Term Care

Seek Help and Report

To find an Ombudsman in your area, visit theconsumervoice.org/get_help.

Visit theconsumervoice.org or call **202-332-2275** to find resources to better protect long-term care residents and to ensure their rights are being protected.

This guide was adapted from the Put a STOP to Poor Care brochure developed by the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care and the National Center on Elder Abuse. Developed with a CMP grant from the MD Office of Healthcare Quality and the Maryland Culture Change Coalition.

Put a Stop to Poor Care



All long-term care residents have the right to receive quality, individualized care, and to be protected from mistreatment, including abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Signs of Quality Care



- Facility is clean, clutter free, smells fresh, and is not too hot or cold.
- Calls for assistance (e.g., call lights) are responded to quickly and kindly.
- Residents appear well groomed, clean, comfortable, alert, happy, and are without restraints.
- Food looks and smells appetizing.
- Staff encourage resident involvement in their care and daily life (e.g., residents choose when to wake up).
- Residents are involved in meaningful activities (both individual and group).
- Community is warm and engaging (e.g., staff know residents and communicate respectfully).

Advocacy Tips

- Get involved in the Resident or Family Council.
- Get to know other residents, especially those without family or visitors.
- Share information about residents' rights and signs of quality care.
- Communicate with staff, compliment good care.
- Learn about the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP).
- Visit often and at varying times.

Warning Signs



- Facility appears understaffed (e.g., call lights not answered promptly or turned off without care being provided).
- Residents' rights are not respected (e.g., no choices in daily routine).
- Quality of food declines (e.g., fewer meal options, less food served).
- High staff turnover, staff not familiar with residents.
- Residents appear bored, less active, not engaged with others or activities.
- Residents and/or family members say concerns have not been resolved.
- Facility is uncomfortable (e.g., not clean, has an odor, too cold/hot, too noisy).
- Medication errors.
- Frequent lack of supplies and broken equipment.

Advocacy Tips

- Work with the Resident or Family Council to address concerns as a group.
- Become familiar with residents' rights and facility requirements.
- Document your concerns.
- Share concerns with Administration. Provide specific examples.
- Share concerns with the LTCOP.
- Visit frequently, vary the time of your visits, and take notes of any issues you identify.
- Review state survey reports to see if the facility has been cited for similar issues before.

Red Flags



- Significant, sudden change in resident behavior (e.g., withdrawn, fearful, lack of appetite).
- Dramatic physical changes (e.g., weight loss, decline in mobility).
- Unexplained injuries (e.g., bruising).
- Residents are physically restrained and/or appear to be overmedicated (e.g., slumped in wheelchairs).
- Severe lack of staff (e.g., long delays or no response to call lights, frequent falls, lack of assistance to use the restroom).
- Residents appear unclean, have odors.
- Staff disregard residents and their rights.
- Complaints are ignored.
- Missing personal items or funds.

Advocacy Tips

- Take detailed notes of concerns (names, dates, times of incidents).
- Contact the Administrator, facility owner, and/or corporate office and share your concerns.
- Contact the LTCOP if complaints are not resolved, staff is unresponsive, and/or for information or advocacy.
- Contact the state survey agency to file complaints, be as specific as possible.
- Report any suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation to investigating agency and/or local law enforcement.