



United Senior Action of Indiana

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TOP TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET GOOD NURSING HOME CARE

1. Not all nursing homes are created equal. **Research** different nursing homes before selecting one. Find out about the facility's performance history. Start early!!!
2. **Staffing** is one of the most important factors in quality care. Learn what the ratio of nurses and nursing assistants to residents is on each shift. (Experts say that to get good care you need at least 1 caregiver to 5 residents on the day shift; 1:10 on the evening shift and 1:15 on the night shift.)

Make sure to show your appreciation to staff when they do a good job!

3. **Review the facility paperwork** carefully before signing. Ask to take it home to review or have an attorney review the papers. Avoid signing arbitration clauses (which waive your constitutional right to a trial if your loved one is ever abused or neglected)!
4. **Pressure sores** are almost always **avoidable** in a nursing home and are usually a sign of poor care. Question the development of any sore and make sure it is treated immediately!
5. Actively participating in the **care plan meeting** one is one of the most important ways to affect the care your loved one will receive. Ask that the care plan be scheduled at a time when you can attend. Speak up at the meeting.
6. You have the right to **review your loved one's records** (if you have your loved one's consent; or if your loved one can no longer make health care decisions and you are the legal decision maker.) Reading the records can help you in monitoring your loved one's care.
7. Families have the right to form **family councils** in nursing homes. A family council is a group of family members and sometimes friends of residents who come together to work for improvements in the care of all residents and to make the facility an even better place. There is strength - and safety - in numbers! Start or join one in your loved one's facility!

8. **Visit** your loved one as often as possible. Try to vary the time and day of week you visit and include weekends and evenings.

9. **Keep a journal** from the very beginning of your loved one's nursing home stay. Record your observations of your loved one and the care s/he receives. If you encounter a problem, document it (for example - when it happened, where, who was involved, what they said or did, whom you talked to about it, etc.) Your documentation can be helpful in getting the problem addressed.

10. **Take action** when there is a problem!

Try to address the problem within the facility first if at all possible. Be polite and respectful at all times, but be persistent.

Help is out there - you are not alone!! There are places you can turn for assistance:

- **The local long-term care ombudsman program.** Ombudsmen are advocates for nursing home residents and their families. The ombudsmen can provide suggestions and information to you about how to address a concern. They can also investigate and work to resolve the problem. To contact the ombudsman for central Indiana, call 1-800-869-0212 or 317-631-9410, ext. 255.
- **The Resident Quality and Family Empowerment Project of the United Senior Action Foundation.** This project provides information, education, guidance, and support to families to help them advocate effectively for quality nursing home care. To contact the project, call 1-800-495-0872.
- **The Indiana State Department of Health.** This state agency is responsible for investigating complaints against nursing homes. You can file a complaint by calling 1-800-246-8909 or writing: Complaint Unit; Division of Long Term Care; Indiana State Department of Health, 2 North Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204 . (Note: Calling and following the call with a written description of the complaint is best!)