

## We Need Your Help – You Can Help Change Nursing Homes

Ever been in a nursing home? Did you like it? Most people don't. Why? Can you articulate it? Thankfully odors do not seem to be the big issue like they once were but many issues still abound. Mostly, that people are dying on the inside. Theoretically, we are good about taking care of a person's body (although that is debatable) but it is the person who gets lost. An institution tells people what they will do and when, what they will eat and how fast, when they will go here and when they will go there. In other words there are minimal choices. Staff are busy and thus the "shifts" become "everyone gets the same" and no one gets anything individual. This is, however and in fact, in direct opposition to the Nursing Home Reform Act of 1987 that actually requires nursing homes to provide those living there quality of life, dignity, rights and choices. It is a sad state of affairs and we need your help. We you're your help in putting to work that old tried and true phenomenon of supply and demand. We need you to join us and our national growing culture change movement to start to demand that nursing homes change. We just need you to know that they can be different and actually should be.

If you know of anyone needing long term care, please start to ask these types of questions:

*Do you wake the people up who live here?*

If they look at you and say something like, "Why of course, always have," say "Oh that won't work for my relative."

*Do you have set meal times?*

If they look at you again like "Why of course," say, "Oh that won't work for my relative."

*Do you have restaurant or buffet style dining?*

If they say, "What are those?," you can either explain them (they're pretty self explanatory) or just move on to the next question.

*Do you have set bathing times?*

If they say, "Oh yes," please keep indicating that will not work for your relative who is used to bathing when he/she wants whether at a set time or not.

*Do your staff members still wear uniforms?*

If they say, "Uh, yeah," say, "Really? I thought it was supposed to be a home, not an institution, where people know each other by their relationships, not their clothing."

*Do you have a scheduled activity calendar or do you have spontaneous activities?*

If they indicate they keep to a schedule, say something to the effect, "Oh really, not everything my relative does is planned, some of it is spontaneous, in fact probably the more fun stuff is spontaneous."

*Do you have consistent staffing?*

If they say yes, press for more information, "So the same staff work on the same unit all the time? They don't 'float?'" Ask for an example of a beautiful relationship that has formed between care giver and a resident.

*Do you have units and wings or neighborhoods and households?*

Edu-Catering: Catering Education for Compliance and Culture Change in Long-term Care  
303-981-7228 [carmen@edu-catering.com](mailto:carmen@edu-catering.com) and [www.edu-catering.com](http://www.edu-catering.com)



Units, wings and hallways are old and institutional. Neighborhoods and households are smaller living environments where you become well known by the consistent care givers who serve you according to you, your preferences and your routine.

If they ask if your family member wants to move in, say “Oh no, my relative is used to living life the way she wants, eating when she wants and what she wants, bathing how and when she wants, doing what she wants when she wants, living in a home where she is loved by people who know her well. She needs to live somewhere where she will thrive and live a vibrant life.”

P.S. If you live where there are not many nursing home or assisted living home options, ask the questions anyway so they know you know what they really should and could be offering. You will give them cause to realize they are behind the times and you will also play a little part in changing nursing homes, together we can.

Submitted by Carmen Bowman on 3-21-11 and printed in the Carbon Valley News April 2011

