

## NURSING HOMES NEED MORE STAFF!

**What is the problem?** Far too often there are not enough certified nursing assistants (aides) and nurses in nursing homes to provide the care each resident requires. Most nursing home residents need some type of help with activities such as walking, eating, going to the bathroom or getting out of bed. Others may need constant supervision or have complex medical conditions. Chronic understaffing in many nursing homes across the country harms residents and prevents them from getting even the most basic care they need.

### **What happens to residents when there are not enough staff?**

Residents suffer physically. They experience:

- Painful pressure ulcers (“bed sores”)
- Malnutrition
- Unplanned weight loss
- Dehydration
- Incontinence
- Avoidable declines in ability to move
- Injuries – including fractures – from falls due to lack of assistance
- Preventable hospitalizations
- Death

Residents suffer emotionally. They experience:

- Loneliness, fear and sense of isolation
- Lack of ongoing, valued relationships with staff
- Loss of dignity

### **Who else suffers when there are not enough staff?**

- **Staff:** When too few staff care for too many residents, injuries often result. Nursing assistants suffer a rate of on-the-job injury that is among the highest of any occupations.
- **Families of residents:** Family members become worried, distressed, upset and anxious when their loved ones don’t get the care they need.
- **You, the American taxpayer:** When poor care due to understaffing harms residents or makes them sicker, they are usually sent to the hospital, where thousands of Medicare dollars from taxpayers will be spent attempting to reverse the harm.

**Doesn't the federal government require minimum staffing levels to protect residents?**

**NO!** Current federal regulations require "sufficient" staffing to meet the needs of residents. "Sufficient" is not defined. Instead, each nursing home can decide for itself how many certified nursing assistants and nurses to assign, leaving open the possibility that a facility can cut staffing levels dangerously low to drive up profits.

**Are there recommended staffing standards? YES!** A study by the federal government determined that nursing home residents need at least 4.1 hours of care per day: 2.8 hours from nursing assistants, .55 hours from licensed practical nurses and .75 hours from registered nurses. This is the minimum amount of care needed to prevent common quality of care problems like pressure ulcers, dehydration, and losing the ability to carry out daily tasks like eating, dressing, and walking.

**What can you do?**

- **Join the Consumer Voice Nursing Home Staffing Campaign by:**
  - Going to: <http://www.theconsumervoice.org/betterstaffing>
  - Emailing us at: [info@theconsumervoice.org](mailto:info@theconsumervoice.org)
  - Calling our toll free number: (866-992-3668)
- **Contact your members of Congress by:**
  - Emailing them a message using our easy online system. Go to: [http://wfc2.wiredforchange.com/o/8641/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action\\_KEY=9692](http://wfc2.wiredforchange.com/o/8641/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=9692)
  - Signing our campaign postcard and mailing it to us.

*You don't even need to know who your members are – we'll take care of that for you!*

Many congressmen/women and senators don't know about understaffing in nursing homes. They hear from nursing home owners and operators, but rarely from residents, family members and other concerned citizens. Tell them that they need to protect nursing home residents by increasing the staffing levels in our country's nursing homes.

- **Spread the word!** Tell everyone you know about the need for more staff in nursing homes and ask them to also contact their members of Congress.

***\*For more information or citations, please contact The Consumer Voice.***

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*The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (formerly NCCNHR) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma L. Holder that advocates for quality care and quality of life for consumers in all long-term-care settings.*