

FAMILY MATTERS

A NEWSLETTER OF THE CHICAGO FAMILY COUNCIL PROJECT: ILLINOIS CITIZENS FOR BETTER CARE

FAMILY COUNCIL TIPS & TOOLS

Topic #4: Holiday Visiting Suggestions

There are many ways for families and long-term care residents to enjoy the holidays together.

- ❖ Ask/arrange for your family to eat a meal with your loved one at her facility.
- ❖ Decorate your loved one's room, do a craft or write cards together, or bring his favorite holiday foods to help him remember holiday traditions and feel excited.
- ❖ Spend time together: take a walk, watch her favorite TV show or movie, read out loud, or talk about your family or current events.
- ❖ Sing holiday songs, look at photo albums, or watch family videos. Carry on and adapt family traditions to maintain family identity and feelings of belonging.
- ❖ Wrap holiday gifts together.
- ❖ Carefully assess where your loved one with memory loss should spend the holiday; spending the holiday away from home may not be something he enjoys. Taking him on short outings before the holiday can make the transition easier if visiting other places.
- ❖ Describe your loved one's condition and behavior to non-frequent visitors. Look at photos and talk with your loved one about who will be visiting.
- ❖ Watch your loved one for agitation, frustration and difficulty communicating. Try not to overwhelm her with many visitors. Quiet distractions can help a resident with memory loss to calm down.
- ❖ Take pleasure in your visits and the joy that you share. Though your loved one may not be able to converse a great deal, it is important to spend time together.

IL FAMILY COUNCIL SUCCESSES

Family councils HAVE made a difference!

Family councils in Illinois have:

- Raised funds to purchase additional blankets for residents;
- Advocated successfully for consistent staff assignment;
- Advocated successfully for staff to take breaks in shifts, thereby eliminating facility-wide breaks, mealtimes, and in-services that left residents completely unattended;
- Informed an administrator about the difficult transition from private pay to public aid. As a result, an accounting firm was hired to exclusively handle public aid applications; the firm will not be paid until the applications are approved.

UPDATES

- On 11/4 and 11/9, family council members from 6 Chicago - area homes attended workshops sponsored by ICBC: "Maintaining a Family Council" and "Effective Communication with Nursing Home Staff."
- The IL Family Council Coalition met on 11/15 in Springfield and identified three objectives: promote communication among IL family council members; influence long-term care public policy; educate family councils on IL nursing home issues. Next meeting: January, in Springfield; tele- or videoconferencing available. Family members of IL nursing home residents are welcome. **For more information**, contact Alicia Loucks: 312.730.8370 or aliciaicbc@core.com; or **join the IL Family Council listserv** at Illinois-Family-Councils@googlegroups.com.

TOPIC: FELONS IN IL NURSING HOMES

IL Department of Public Health says there are 900- 1,000 "identified offenders" living in IL nursing homes. An identified offender is someone who has been convicted of a sex offense, is on parole/probation/mandatory supervised release for a felony conviction, or has committed a felony such as a violent crime, drug-related crime, or forgery, that disqualifies him/her from working in a nursing home.

BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS

Licensed nursing homes for adults must request a criminal background check from the IL State Police within 24 hours of admission for all new adult residents to determine if the resident is an identified offender. If the background check is inconclusive, (i.e.: if more than one person has the same name and birth date), a fingerprint check is done, unless the resident is completely immobile, or if Public Health agrees that the resident poses no threat.

IDENTIFIED OFFENDERS IN NURSING HOMES

Having admitted a resident who is on parole/probation, that residents' conviction and imprisonment records are sent to the nursing home by the Department of Corrections. Within 14 days, Public Health must complete a

Criminal History Analysis based on information such as the residents' criminal and prison record and sex offender evaluation (if any). The evaluation determines what security measures are required for the resident and to protect other residents.

GO TO WWW.ILLINOISCARES.ORG AND CLICK ON "NURSING HOME BASICS" TO FIND ADDRESSES FOR STATE WEBSITES LISTING REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS AND PAROLEES' ADDRESSES.

A recently passed IL law requires nursing homes to write a letter and post a notice stating that families can ask if there are identified offenders in a facility. Previously, nursing homes with identified offenders were required to send family members a letter and post a notice stating that there were identified offender residents. Under the new law, however, the facility's letters and postings are only required to refer readers to state websites listing registered sex offenders and parolees' addresses. These websites do not list many potential "identified offenders," including those convicted of violent crimes not on parole, and persons convicted of sex offenses before there was a sex offender registry.

NATIONAL UPDATE

"Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes"

Take a stand in favor of improved quality of care and quality of life for residents nationwide, by joining a broad-based coalition of long-term care providers, caregivers, medical and quality improvement experts, government agencies, and consumer advocates. You, as a consumer, can show your commitment to excellence in nursing homes: **sign up for the National Campaign for Quality.** Go to www.nhqualitycampaign.org or email: info@nhqualitycampaign.org.

RESOURCES

- ICBC: www.illinoiscares.org (updated!)
- NCCNHR: www.nccnhr.org
- Nursing Home Compare: <http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/home.asp>
- Nursing Home Monitors: www.nursinghomonitors.org
- A Perfect Cause: www.aperfectcause.org
- Pioneer Network: www.pioneernetwork.net

The Chicago Family Council Project is a project of Illinois Citizens for Better Care (www.illinoiscares.org), and the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (www.nccnhr.org). For more information contact ICBC, 220 South State Street, Suite 1928, Chicago, IL 60604, tel. 312-663-5120, or email icbc@core.com