

Serving residents of long-term care homes in Vanderburgh County

VOICES VIEWPOINT

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WHAT IS VOICES?

VOICES, Inc. provides free and confidential Ombudsman services. It is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1980 to address concerns and problems in Evansville nursing homes and licensed assisted living homes. VOICES, Inc. is the only agency in Vanderburgh County dedicated solely to advocate for residents in these homes. Services include investigation of complaints, resolution of problems, and protection of resident rights. Additional services include information/training to nursing home staff, residents and the general public on nursing home issues—these issues are quality of life and care, selection of a nursing home and sources of payment for care.



Nursing home residents *APPRECIATE* gifts . . .



The majority of people living in nursing homes receive Medicaid to help pay for their care. In these instances, ALL their income except \$52 goes to the nursing home to pay for the cost of care. The resident's income of \$52 per month is their "Personal Needs Allowance" (PNA).

Although the home is required to provide certain basic care items such as toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant and tissue, they are typically generic products. If a resident prefers quality personal care items such as soft tissues or fragranced shampoo, the resident must pay for it out of their PNA. Surprisingly, the cost of their personal phone/cable TV service, haircuts, newspapers, sodas, candy, greeting cards, CLOTHES (socks, underwear, shoes) and etc. are the responsibility of the resident.

For these reasons, nursing home residents welcome your gifts any time of the year.

WHAT IS AN OMBUDSMAN?

A long-term care Ombudsman is an individual who represents residents of long-term care homes and works to ensure that the residents receive the quality of care, quality of life and rights to which they are entitled under both state and federal law.



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RESIDENT RIGHTS REVIEW

Your Right to Self-Determination and Choice

All residents of nursing homes and licensed assisted living facilities are granted rights as persons worthy of dignity and respect; they have a right to a dignified existence and self-determination. These rights are protected under federal and state laws. Employees, families, community agencies and residents must work together in protecting these rights. Rights to self-determination and choice are as follows:

- ✦ Right to choose your personal physician and other providers of services, such as pharmacy and hospice
- ✦ Right to receive full information, in advance, and participate in your care plan and treatment
- ✦ Right to refuse your treatment including medications—any refusals of treatment must be accompanied by counseling on the medical consequences of such refusal
- ✦ Right to choose your activities, schedules and health care consistent with your interests, assessments and plans of care
- ✦ Right to reside and receive services with reasonable accommodations of your needs and preferences, except when the health or safety of you or other residents would be endangered
- ✦ Right to make choices about the quality of your life
- ✦ Right to interact with members of the community both inside and outside the facility
- ✦ Right to voice your concerns, without punishment, and receive a prompt response
- ✦ Right to organize and participate in resident council
- ✦ Right to participate in social, religious and community activities while not interfering with the rights of other residents
- ✦ Right to keep your personal belongings, as space permits, unless doing so would violate the rights of others or create a health/safety hazard



Loss and Theft of Personal Items

During the Holiday season I receive many calls about residents who are missing items they received as gifts. I hope you have never had the unpleasant experience of finding that your personal items have disappeared—either through loss or theft. Personal loss is NOT an inevitable fact of life in a nursing home or assisted living home, and you do not have to accept it!

For most residents, the only link to the past may be a few cherished possessions, so protecting these invaluable belongings from loss or theft is of great importance.



Here are some things you can do to protect your belongings:

- Use a permanent marker to write your name on clothing and other personal items in an area that does not show when worn or used.
- Engrave or permanently mark dentures and eyeglasses with your name. (Most dentists are able to engrave dentures.)
- Ask to see your personal inventory sheet and verify all your possessions are listed.
- RETAIN A COPY of the inventory sheet and keep any receipts or appraisals of these items for your records.
- Ask to be provided with something that can be locked, such as a drawer or box. Keep the key with you at ALL times and find out if anyone else has a copy of the key.
- Only keep small amounts of cash for your use. Homes are obligated to maintain a “Patient Trust Account” for you (at your request) and to provide reasonable access (during normal business hours) to your account.
- Identify the staff personnel responsible for investigating reports of loss and theft. Report any loss to that person IN WRITING as soon as you can AND SEND A COPY TO YOUR OMBUDSMAN (see page four for address). Make sure that the home gives you the results of the investigation.
- Request reimbursement if the property cannot be recovered.

Federal and state laws require long-term care homes to protect the personal possessions of their residents and have written policies for handling loss and theft. Ask to see a copy of these policies. If a home fails to maintain a reasonably secure environment, the home may be held responsible for the loss or theft of your personal property.

GIFT IDEAS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

- Ask the resident what gifts he/she would like
- Large print calendars with special occasions noted (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.)
- Framed prayers, quotes or family photos
- All occasion cards—addressed with postage
- Postage stamps 
- Ballpoint pens
- Small bulletin board that you can change each month or with each season
- Twin size quilt with matching pillow shams
- Wreaths to decorate the door
- Wall decorations—avoid tabletop items
- Sun catchers or mobiles
- Imitation candles—flameless
- Universal TV remote with large buttons
- Wristwatch, wall clock or alarm clock with large numbers or for the hearing impaired
- Small portable radio with batteries
- Crossword and/or word search books
- Books and individual magazines (picture, recipe, travel, crafts & hobbies, etc.)
- Cassette tapes/CD's (resident's favorite music, audio books, etc.)
- Free books/magazines on tape for the visually impaired through the Evansville Public Library 
- Magazine subscriptions—*Reader's Digest* offers large print subscriptions
- Subscription to local or church newspaper
- Lighted magnifying glass
- Photo album or scrapbook filled with photos of family or friends, postcards of places of interest and messages from loved ones 
- Memory book that chronicles the residents' past interests and achievements
- Book of jokes or cartoons
- Guestbook for recording visitors
- Non-poisonous/silk plants or flowers
- Phone cards for calling long distance
- Telephone installation with monthly fee paid
- Cable installation with monthly fee paid
- Cater or carry-in the resident's favorite meal
- Box of hard candies—sugar free if needed
- Wheelchair or walker accessories (cup holder, carry bag, basket, etc.)
- Coin purse with money for sodas, chips or candy—replenish each time you visit 
- Gift certificate/money for beauty salon or barber shop services
- Special toiletries (scented body wash, lotion, lip moisturizer, makeup, perfume, aftershave, quality facial tissue, toothpaste, etc.)
- Hair clips and/or headbands
- Costume jewelry
- Warm socks
- Electric razor 

This gift list was compiled with the assistance of residents Judith Mangum and Richard Kellough.

When purchasing any gift, you need to keep in mind personal likes, hobbies and interests. Also, consider any allergies or food restrictions a person may have.

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