

LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

Advancing Quality, Dignity & Justice

Issue Brief

Animal Care Standards vs. Nursing Home Resident Experiences: General Care & Treatment

The quality and safety of nursing homes are longstanding public concerns. Numerous studies over the years have identified widespread and significant deficiencies in care, including serious abuse and neglect. It is such cases of degrading and inhumane conditions that led us to question the extent to which the experiences of residents in nursing homes actually fall below the standards and expectations for treatment of animals in zoos and other settings.

This is one issue in a series of briefs that provide the results of our assessment of the extent to which conditions in nursing homes fail to meet the standards of care for animals. Each brief focuses on an issue which we have identified as important. These briefs, and the [full report](https://nursinghome411.org/ltccc-report-animal-care-vs-nursing-home-care) on our assessment, are available at <https://nursinghome411.org/ltccc-report-animal-care-vs-nursing-home-care>.

The point of this work is not to trivialize the experiences of either nursing home residents or animals but, rather, to illustrate how systemic failures to hold nursing homes accountable for abuse and neglect too often subject residents to conditions that not only fall below the federal nursing home standards of care, but also below accepted standards for the humane treatment of animals.

EXAMPLE OF ANIMAL CARE STANDARD VS. NURSING HOME RESIDENT EXPERIENCE



“[A]ll animals must be well cared for and presented in a manner reflecting modern zoological practices in exhibit design, balancing animals’ welfare requirements with aesthetic and educational considerations.”

-Accreditation Standards, AZA



A Maryland nursing home failed to properly implement baseline care plans for two residents. One resident was admitted to the facility for rehabilitation after surgery. Unfortunately, “the baseline care plan did not address the potential for pain/discomfort, potential for post-operative infection or other concerns specific to the medical condition”

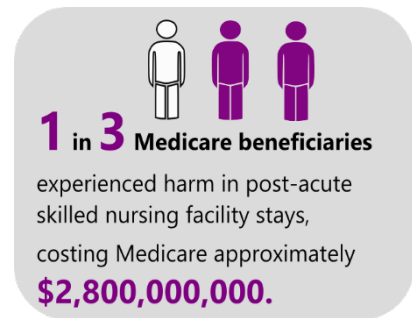
-Elder Justice “No Harm” Newsletter

STANDARDS FOR NURSING HOME CARE

Though poorly enforced, there are strong federal standards to ensure that nursing home residents receive care that meets recognized professional standards and that is responsive to the needs and goals identified in the resident's assessment and individualized care plan. For more information and resources, including fact sheets on [requirements for nursing home staff competency](#) and [resident assessment and care planning](#), visit the [Learning Center](#) of our website, www.NursingHome411.org.

RELEVANT NURSING HOME STATISTICS

- **Preventable harm.** In 2014, [a federal study found](#) that an astounding one in three Medicare beneficiaries who go to a nursing home for rehab are harmed within an average of about two weeks of entering a facility. Hospital care associated with treating this harm – more than half (59 percent) of which was preventable – cost Medicare approximately \$2.8 billion in a single year.
- **High rates of pressure sores.** Though pressure ulcers are largely preventable with professional care and monitoring, [close to 90,000 nursing home residents](#) suffer from them every day.



NEWS AND REPORTS

Regulators focus on Lewiston's Marshwood nursing home as problems mount

A 2019 [Sun Journal \(ME\) report](#) described a resident whose nursing home failed to provide essential pressure ulcer care, resulting in wounds that "seemed bigger and deeper . . . [and a] new wound [which] teemed with maggots. . . . Another patient's family found them in bed 'covered in dried feces and soaked in urine.' It happened multiple times a week."

Resident deaths: both sudden and slow

According to a 2018 [investigative report in The Buffalo News](#),

Death came suddenly for Arturo Bucci. The 85-year-old retired machinist was in his motorized wheelchair when it toppled more than 12 feet down a creek embankment. The spill left him face down in the water outside an East Aurora nursing home.

For Donna Bantle, death came more slowly. Her daughter noticed a large, ugly bedsore on Bantle's back when she was a resident at Absolut Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation at Aurora Park — the same facility where Bucci died.

"This thing is going to kill me," she told her daughter. Months later, when Bantle died, the death certificate listed an infection in a lower back wound as a contributing factor.