

LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

Advancing Quality, Dignity & Justice

Issue Brief

Animal Care Standards vs. Nursing Home Resident Experiences: Medical Supervision

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.

ANIMAL CARE STANDARD VS. NURSING HOME RESIDENT EXPERIENCE



The attending veterinarian shall conduct on-site evaluations of each cetacean at least once a month. The evaluation shall include a visual inspection of the animal; examination of the behavioral, feeding, and medical records of the animal; and a discussion of each animal with an animal care staff member familiar with the animal.

-[Animal Welfare Act, USDA](#)



A physician at a for-profit Buffalo nursing home inappropriately administered insulin injections to a diabetic resident despite a hospital discharge note stating, "PLEASE AVOID GIVING THIS PATIENT INSULIN." The physician, who signed an order to administer insulin, blamed a nurse for inaccurately reading to him the resident's discharge directives.

-[Buffalo News](#)

STANDARDS FOR NURSING HOME CARE

Though too often residents lack access to a doctor (especially one of their choosing), in fact nursing homes are required under federal rules to “ensure that the medical care of each resident is supervised by a physician. . .[and to] be seen by a physician at least once every 30 days for the first 90 days after admission, and at least once every 60 thereafter.” Federal rules also dictate that a resident has the right to choose his or her attending physician. For more information, see LTCCC’s [Fact Sheet: Requirements for Nursing Home Physician, Rehab & Dental Services](#).

RELEVANT NURSING HOME STATISTICS

- **Adequate Nursing and Physician Services.** In 2018, there were [3,876 citations for failing to provide sufficient nursing and physician services](#).
- **Effective Administration.** There are an average of [300 citations per year for failure to administer a nursing home](#) in a way that maintains the well-being of each resident.
- **Competent Care Staff.** In 2018, there were [938 citations for failure to ensure that nursing staff have the appropriate competencies](#) and/or skills to care for residents in the facility.

NEWS AND REPORTS

The blame game

A physician at a for-profit Buffalo nursing home, Humboldt House Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, [inappropriately administered insulin injections to a diabetic resident](#) despite a hospital discharge note stating, "PLEASE AVOID GIVING THIS PATIENT INSULIN," in capital letters. The physician said he failed to follow through on his practice of reading the discharge summary, but also blamed a nurse for inaccurately reading to him the resident’s discharge directives. The incident occurred days after the resident had been hospitalized after being “twice found unresponsive in her bed and had to be revived with medications and fruit juice.” The federal government fined the facility \$47,827, the sixth-largest nursing home fine in New York in 2018.

A failure to communicate

[Heritage Green Rehab & Skilled Nursing \(NY\)](#) [failed to notify the family and physician](#) of a resident who refused medications for 12 days in a month. Though the lapse in communication regarding the resident’s refusals led staff to administer inappropriate medication dosages, the surveyor still cited the violation as no harm.

Out of range

[Portland Health & Rehabilitation Center \(OR\)](#) [“failed to provide appropriate services and devices”](#) to increase range of motion for one resident and prevent further decrease in range of motion for another resident. Both residents had left hand contractures but were observed not wearing splint devices despite records indicating they should. While the surveyor determined the residents were at risk for worsening contractures and conditions, the violation was cited as no harm.