

# LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

*Advancing Quality, Dignity & Justice*

*Issue Brief*

## **Animal Care Standards vs. Nursing Home Resident Experiences: Stimulating & Safe Environment**

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**



The physical environment in the primary enclosures must be enriched by providing means of expressing noninjurious species-typical activities. Species differences should be considered when determining the type or methods of enrichment.

*-[Animal Welfare Act, USDA](#)*



At a Minnesota facility, a resident who was unable to communicate had a care plan which called for “daily independent activities” and interventions including “stimulating music, television and other activities.” Instead, the surveyor observed several days in which the resident “was lying in bed with the lights on without any music, television or interaction from staff.”

*-[Statement of Deficiencies, CMS](#)*

## STANDARDS FOR NURSING HOME CARE

There are numerous federal standards that require both a safe environment and one that meets residents' psycho-social needs and goals. Importantly, these requirements relate to service for all residents, irrespective of their cognitive status or physical abilities. More information on these standards can be found in LTCCC's [Primer: Nursing Home Quality Standards](#) as well as in various fact sheets and webinars in LTCCC's [Learning Center](#).

### RELEVANT NURSING HOME STATISTICS

- **Boredom and depression.** [A CDC study estimated that about half of nursing home residents have a diagnosis of depression](#), approximately twice the rate found in adult day services centers (24%) and residential care communities (25%).
- **No place like home?** [A 2018 study comparing three nursing homes](#) found that residents spent significantly less time in their own room when residing in the facility with the least homelike rooms (9%) compared to the residents in the two facilities with more homelike rooms (34% and 57%).
- **Activities.** The same study also found that when nursing homes had activities available, most residents would participate.
- **Engaging residents with dementia.** A [2010 Aging & Mental Health article](#) noted that "studies have found that nursing home residents with dementia spend the majority of their time engaged in no activity at all, with unstructured time accounting for two-thirds of the day or more. . . ."

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- *Aging & Mental Health*

### NEWS AND REPORTS

#### Resident's care plan ignored

A resident in a Minnesota nursing home "had altered socialization due to the inability to communicate." To address this, his care plan called for "daily independent activities" and interventions including "stimulating music, television and other activities." Instead, the [surveyor observed several days in which the resident "was lying in bed with the lights on without any music, television or interaction from staff."](#) An interview with a family member, who visited the resident almost daily, indicated that the resident "was always lying in bed without any music or television."

#### 'Whatever it would take'

[A Kansas City nursing home's](#) ceiling collapsed and its water stopped running after it was taken over by the Centers Health Care, a New York-based post-acute health care provider which recently purchased the facility and turned over its management. Months earlier, [Centers Health Care COO Amir Abramchik told Skilled Nursing News](#) that the company would "do whatever it would take to save these homes."