

LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

Advancing Quality, Dignity & Justice

Issue Brief

Animal Care Standards vs. Nursing Home Resident Experiences: Treatment of Injuries

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



An elephant's skin must be thoroughly inspected on a daily basis and cared for as needed through bathing, removal of dead skin, and treatment of dry skin or other skin problems. The elephant's skin should be supple, free of dead skin buildup, not cracked or dry and free of folliculitis.

[-Accreditation Standards, AZA](#)



Several residents at a for-profit Tennessee nursing home were harmed after the facility failed to prevent and treat their pressure ulcers. One resident, who had not received body audits 35 days of the 37 days since admission, developed a Stage 4 pressure ulcer on their left buttock.

[-Statement of Deficiencies, CMS](#)

STANDARDS FOR NURSING HOME CARE

Federal nursing home standards specifically require that facilities ensure that every “resident receives care, consistent with professional standards of practice, to prevent pressure ulcers and does not develop pressure ulcers unless the individual’s clinical condition demonstrates that they were unavoidable; and [that a] resident with pressure ulcers receives necessary treatment and services, consistent with professional standards of practice, to promote healing, prevent infection and prevent new ulcers from developing.”

For more information on pressure ulcer prevention and care standards, please see our [fact sheet](#). Visit the [Learning Center](#) for resources on resident assessment and care planning, tools for addressing abuse and neglect, and more.

RELEVANT NURSING HOME STATISTICS

- **Pressure ulcers.** [Over 93,000 current U.S. nursing home residents – 7.3 percent – have pressure ulcers and about 85 percent](#) of nursing home residents are at risk of developing them.
- **Facility-level data:** LTCCC periodically publishes the pressure ulcer rates for every licensed U.S. nursing home and updates on which facilities have been cited for inadequate pressure ulcer care. For the latest data, visit <https://nursinghome411.org/other-nursing-home-information/>.

NEWS AND REPORTS

Unstageable pressure ulcer

Several residents at a for-profit Tennessee nursing home, [The Waters of Robertson, LLC](#), were [harmed because the facility failed to prevent and treat their pressure ulcers](#). One resident developed an unstageable pressure ulcer on top of their right buttock. Another resident who developed a Stage 4 pressure ulcer on their left buttock had not received body audits 35 days of the 37 days since admission. According to the surveyor, the facility’s failure to notify a physician about newly identified pressure ulcers put residents in “Immediate Jeopardy,” causing or likely to cause serious injury, harm, impairment, or death.

Improper skin care

[Advanced Subacute Rehabilitation Center at Sewell \(NJ\)](#) [failed to provide appropriate pressure ulcer care and prevent new ulcers from developing](#) for a resident. The facility failed to comply with a physician’s orders to apply antipressure heel protective devices to a resident at risk for impaired skin integrity. The resident experienced redness on their right heel following the observation of improper skin care, but the surveyor still cited the violation as no harm.

Failure to initiate treatment

[Resthove Home-Whiteside County \(IL\)](#) [failed to prevent and initiate treatment for a wound](#) behind a resident’s left ear. The wound, caused by an oxygen tube resting on the ear, could have been prevented by loosening the oxygen tubing and by using foam padding on the tubing, according to the Director of Nursing. Though the resident had the sore for several weeks, the surveyor still cited the violation as no harm.