

LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

Advancing Quality, Dignity & Justice

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN NURSING HOMES FACT SHEET

Social workers contribute to the well-being and quality of life of the residents in many ways, addressing not just the medical, but also the emotional, social, and psychological needs of the residents. “The principle components of social work services in long-term care settings are designed to provide assessment, treatment, rehabilitation, and supportive care, and to preserve and enhance social functioning.”¹

Note: Information below is directly quoted or paraphrased from the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), federal guidance, or other resources (see footnotes). Federal standards are applicable to all residents in licensed U.S. nursing homes, including short-term, long-term, private pay, Medicaid, Medicare, or privately insured.

Social Workers [42 C.F.R. § 483.70(p); F850]

Nursing homes with more than 120 residents are required to “employ a qualified social worker on a full-time basis.”² A qualified social worker has:

1. A minimum of a bachelor’s degree in social work or a bachelor’s degree in a human services field; and
2. One year of supervised social work experience in a health care setting working directly with individuals.

Key Contributions of Social Workers:

- **Psychosocial Support:** help individuals cope with the transition to nursing homes; address issues such as depression, anxiety, and feelings of isolation.
- **Advocacy:** advocating for residents, ensuring their rights are respected and needs are met.
- **Care Planning:** social workers can play a role in developing and implementing individual care plans.
- **Family Support:** provide support to families and help them understand the needs and conditions of residents by offering counseling and education.
- **Resource Connection:** connect residents and families with community resources, such as financial assistance, transportation, and support groups.
- **Quality of Life:** by addressing the social, emotional, and psychosocial needs of residents, social workers contribute to enhancing residents’ quality of life.

¹ NASW Standards for Social Work Services in Long-Term Care Facilities, <https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/NASW-Practice-Standards-Guidelines/NASW-Standards-for-Social-Work-Services-in-Long-Term-Care-Facilities>.

² 42 CFR § 483.70.

Resident-Centered Advocacy Tips

- **Open communication.** Schedule regular meetings with the social worker to discuss the resident's care plan, progress, and any concerns.
- **Participate in care planning meetings.** Active participation can help to ensure the resident's needs and preferences are considered.
- **Collaborate with the social worker** to understand and advocate for the residents' rights within the nursing home.
- **Emotional support.** Any long-term care journey is likely to be an emotional one. Utilize the social worker's counseling services for emotional support and to address issues like depression, anxiety, or adjustment difficulties. Attend support groups facilities by the nursing home social workers to connect with other residents and families experiencing similar challenges. It's important to remember that you cannot support your loved one without also supporting yourself.

Visit www.nursinghome411.org for the latest staffing data. Our [Nursing Home Staffing Data](#) page includes information on nurse staffing and non-nurse staffing, including social work staff.