

Public Relations Guide

I CARE

a long-term care ombudsman program



A LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Keep the Promise

Quality Care Today

Table of Contents

Page #

I.	Introduction	3
II.	Newspapers, radio and television	5
	1. Working with the media	5
	2. Newspapers	5
	3. Radio	6
	4. Television	6
	5. Press releases	6
	6. Resources	
	• Press release	7
	• I CARE articles	8
	• Public service announcements	13
III.	Educational seminars/Family councils	14
	1. What are educational seminars?	14
	2. Resources	
	• Educational seminar news release	15
	• Educational seminar agenda and checklist	16
IV.	Caring Partnerships	19
	1. Community Caring Partners	19
	2. Resources	
	• Community Partnership agreement	20
	• Caring Partnership certificate	21
	• Inserts for newsletters/church bulletins/organizations announcements	22
V.	Public hearings	23
	1. What is a public hearing?	23
	2. People involved in a public hearing	23

3. Arranging a public hearing	23
4. Materials needed for a public hearing	24
5. The "Big Day"	25
6. Follow up	25
7. Resources	
• Press release	26
• Agenda	27
• Timecards	28
• Guidelines	30
VI. Legislative and advocacy initiatives	31
1. Resources	
• Letter to legislators	32

I. Introduction

The history of the Illinois Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program's public relation's efforts has been cost effective and informative, but limited in its message.

However, the I CARE ombudsman program looks to further educational efforts with a renewed vitality not only in public affairs but also in legislative reform within current laws and regulations.

These efforts can only be obtained through the dedicated work of I CARE's volunteer advocates. The message of quality care and a quality of life for residents at the highest practical level must be communicated to residents, families and long-term care facilities through a sustained public relations program within local communities.

I CARE believes the involvement of volunteers at the local level in public relations is quintessential in *greater* public awareness of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

The objectives of the public relations plan include:

- 1) Educating residents of long-term care facilities, families of residents and the general public that the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program works to empower residents and families by protecting, advocating and defending residents' rights.
- 2) Identifying and communicating to the public the gaps or issues in current government laws, regulations and polices which fail to promote meaningful access to the ombudsman program for residents.
- 3) Empowering residents and families to have a voice in shaping policy within long-term care facilities through stronger advocacy efforts within the nursing homes and through legislative initiatives at the local and state level through resident and family councils.

To promote the public relations plan, I CARE proposes:

1. Redesigned brochures, posters (attached) and fliers to better identify and explain the nature of the I CARE Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program;
2. Annual press conferences that highlight cases of neglect and abuse within nursing homes;
3. A statewide awareness campaign that includes newspaper, radio, television and internet public service announcements;
4. A multimedia web site -www.projectadvocate.org-that is an informational beacon regarding quality care in nursing homes; and
5. A statewide council that consolidates all long-term care advocacy groups to work collectively for residents' and families' rights.

The endeavors of volunteer advocates throughout the State of Illinois will benefit the cause of residents' rights immensely. The only way to bring about a reformation in nursing home care within the State of Illinois is for advocates and families to "SHED THE LIGHT OF TRUTH ON QUALITY CARE FOR RESIDENTS" and promote "NO NEGLECT" in nursing homes.

II. Newspapers, radio and television

The greatest resource for a volunteer advocate to promote the importance of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is through local newspaper, radio and television coverage.

A volunteer advocate should meet with the editors of local papers and program directors of radio and television stations to discuss the underlying problems for residents in long-term care facilities and how the media needs to become involved in promoting residents' rights.

Working with the media

When meeting with the media, always provide a packet of information regarding the I CARE program. This information should include as much material you can provide about I CARE and how the program advocates for residents' rights in long-term care facilities. It is generally a good idea to provide a brief fact sheet that outlines the material and highlights some of the most important aspects of I CARE. For example,

- I CARE is a volunteer based program comprised of (number of volunteers) in (name of county) that works to protect residents' rights in nursing homes;
- I CARE is mandated by federal and state laws and regulations to protect, defend and advocate for residents' rights in long-term care facilities; and
- Residents in nursing homes have the right to choice and autonomy at the maximum extent possible.

Very often, the media desires human-interest stories to promote social change. Advocates can provide information regarding nursing home experiences without revealing confidential information to the press.

Besides sitting down with the editor of a newspaper or program director of the news station and discussing the I CARE program, there are other means in which you can provide information to the general public about the ombudsman program.

Newspapers

- Write a letter to the editor
- Contribute articles regularly to the Senior's Page of a newspaper
- Write an opinion in an op-ed section of the newspaper

Radio

- Try to be a guest on a radio talk show.
- Submit 30-second public service announcements to the public service director of the station.

Television

- Many news stations have local public affairs programs that explain various community based programs that human services to the general public. These programs offer a wonderful opportunity for volunteer advocates to discuss the I CARE program.
- Distribute copies of I CARE's "Quality Care Today" to public access stations.

Press Releases

A press release is the basic form of communication with the media. It is a way to convey relevant, provoking information in a clear and concise format on a particular issue or event for the press and general public.

Resources

- Press release
- I CARE articles-"Ask the Advocate"
- Public service announcements
- "Quality Care Today"-Ask the I CARE staff for the latest taping of this television program devoted to informing Illinois citizens regarding the rights of nursing home residents. This show can be reproduced at public access stations within any community.

**I CARE-EMPOWERING, DEFENDING
AND PROTECTING NURSING HOME RESIDENTS**

I CARE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: John Q. Public (217) 555-5555

City, IL, Month Day, Year -- Within the State of Illinois, over 120,000 Illinoisans reside in 1,100 long-term care facilities. Many people believe that once they enter a nursing home, they lose rights or their rights are altered in some manner--**THIS IS NOT TRUE.**

Nevertheless, while a resident's lifestyle does experience some change, that person never forfeits any rights whatsoever. However, due to lack of staff and care, problems for residents exists within too many nursing homes. According to a report by the Illinois Department of Public Health, nearly 85% of long-term care facilities have conditions in which there is a potential for harm.

A resident within a long-term care facility maintains the basic constitutional and civil rights assured to all citizens. Fundamental rights guaranteed to every resident are:

- The right to choice and autonomy to the maximum extent possible;
- The right to safety and good care at the highest practical level of functioning and well being possible; and
- The right to clear and complete information about his/her medical condition and treatment.

The ombudsman program was created by the national Older Americans Act to protect the rights of nursing home residents by investigating and resolving their complaints. I CARE is a volunteer-based program and is sponsored by the Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation. I CARE's volunteer advocates are recruited from all walks of life and are from local communities.

Persons interested in learning more about: defending residents' rights; I CARE or wish to become a volunteer advocate, should contact (advocate's name) at (217) 555-5555.

I CARE-Ask the Advocate

Article 1

Dear I CARE Advocate:

My mother is in a nursing home and I need to know what rights she has in the development of her care plan. I have heard of I CARE that protects residents' rights but do not know how they protect those rights. How often do the advocates visit nursing homes and how much does their service cost? Mrs. J. R.

Dear Mrs. J. R. The ICARE--Project Advocate program is a free service to nursing home residents, their families and friends, and nursing home staff. This free advocacy service is provided by volunteer advocates from the local community. They visit residents 55 years and older who live in a nursing homes and other licensed long term care facilities. Advocates visit nursing homes monthly. An appointment can be made to talk to an advocate.

The I CARE program is a long-term care ombudsman program authorized by powerful federal and state legislation to improve residents' overall well being.

The I CARE advocate helps anyone who has a question or issue about anything that concerns a resident. This includes residents' rights, care plans, facility services or standards, Medicaid coverage, financial exploitation, advanced directives, and transfer or discharge. The Department on Aging certifies all volunteer and paid advocates. The advocates keep all information confidential unless permission is granted by the resident to release the information. If a resident is incapable of communicating with the advocate, the resident's representative must give permission for release, unless that representative is not acting in the best interest of the resident.

I CARE advocates speak in behalf of residents and provide information to empower residents and their families to speak for themselves in resolving issues. Contact us. Advocates care.

The I CARE Advocate

If you have questions about residents' rights or long term facility care, contact I CARE-Project Advocate, 620 North Walnut, Springfield, IL 62702, or contact your local advocate, phone

I CARE-Ask the Advocate Article 2

Dear I CARE Advocate:

My father who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer disease will soon have to enter a nursing home. Some facilities have Alzheimer units, which are separate from the facility. What should I look for in choosing a facility for him? Mrs. K.H.

Dear Mrs. K.H.

Selecting a nursing home can be problematic even if the resident has no dementia because in many communities there is no choice of facilities. In smaller communities, there may be only one nursing home. In larger towns, the facilities that are believed to give better care often have a waiting list.

Separate Alzheimer units do not equate to better care, but there is an attempt to provide a safe environment, such as locked doors so that the resident cannot wander outside of the unit. There is no research that would assure a family that a separate unit is better than being in a hallway with other residents. What a family needs to determine in selecting a facility is whether there is enough staff on all three shifts and whether the staff is sufficiently trained to care for your loved one.

In selecting a facility for your father, you should inquire about the kind and amount of training the certified nursing assistants have in coping with persons with dementia.

Certified nursing assistants (CNA's) provide about 97 percent of the care of residents. When a nursing home has a high turnover of certified nursing assistants, this will alert you to question whether the CNA's will be adequately trained to deal with the behaviors of residents who are unable to communicate their needs.

Because people with dementia cannot tell anyone exactly what is wrong, the caretakers need to be able to see new or problem behaviors of a resident as cues that something is wrong or there is an unmet need. For example, a woman who had dementia constantly spelled words. One day she suddenly began misspelling words, this alerted the caretaker to investigate the underlying cause. The problem was a urinary infection.

For the care plan of a resident who has Alzheimer, the staff must know the resident well enough to answer the question, "Who is this person?" Dealing with behaviors of a person who has dementia requires the nurses and the C N As to look at all behaviors not as the resident's problems but as symptoms, that expresses unmet needs, according to Joan Rader, R.N.

For more information in selecting a long-term care facility, write to I CARE for a free booklet, ***Medicare and Medicaid: Guide to Choosing A Nursing Home***.

The I CARE Advocate

If you have questions about residents' rights or long term facility care, contact I CARE, 620 North Walnut, Springfield, IL 62702 or contact your local advocate, phone

I CARE-Ask the Advocate

Dear I CARE Advocate:

My aunt is in a nursing home and her regular wheel chair has been broken for about a month. The substitute wheel chair seems too big for her to operate. Sometimes she has a wheelchair without footrests and I am afraid that her feet will be injured when they take her to meals. What are her rights and what can I do? Mr. M. H.

Dear Mr. M. H.

Your aunt has a right to have the use of a wheelchair that fits her needs. She should have a chair that will optimize her wheelchair mobility, promotes correct seating, and assures her safety. Pushing a resident in a wheelchair without footrests should not be tolerated.

Your aunt's wheelchair problems are symptomatic of poor care. Several studies have found that as many as 80 percent of nursing home residents have moderate to severe problems with their wheelchairs. These problems can range from residents having pain, poor posture inhibited mobility, and are "sliding out of the wheelchair".

There are major health problems when residents sit for long hours in a wheelchair with a sling seat, according to Deborah Jones. Sitting in a sling seat over a long period of time leads to problems in the pelvic region and poor leg positions, besides being uncomfortable.

When a wheelchair is too big, (most are made for a person 6 feet tall) and residents cannot reach the ground or have footrests, this causes increased pressure under the thighs. The increased pressure can lead to circulatory problems and edema in the legs.

Most seating problems can be easily corrected. There should be an assessment of a resident's seating and mobility needs. All facilities should have experts in the seating of residents in wheelchairs. All assistive devices, such as wheel chairs, with necessary support for proper alignment while sitting in the chair, should be a part of the individual care plan.

If you want an advocate to go to the care plan conference with you, contact us.

Appropriate seating to meet a resident's needs is a resident's right.

Families should not fail residents and believe that an ill-fitting wheel chair can be tolerated. Advocate for your aunt to have a wheel chair that is a proper fit, which will promote her mobility and health.

I CARE advocates speak in behalf of residents and provide information to empower residents and their families to speak for themselves in resolving issues. Contact us. Advocates care.

The I CARE Advocate

If you have questions about residents' rights or long term facility care, contact I CARE, 620 North Walnut, Springfield, IL 62702, or contact your local advocate, phone

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (30 SECONDS EACH)

PSA #1

In Illinois, over 120,000 Illinoisans reside in long-term care facilities. Many nursing homes are filled with dedicated and caring staff; however, problems and concerns do arise for residents and families. If you or someone you know needs help, contact I CARE, a long-term care ombudsman program. I CARE is a volunteer based program dedicated to protecting, advocating and defending the rights of residents in long-term care facilities. For information, call I CARE at 1-800-842-8538 or visit I CARE's web site at www.icare.ws.

PSA #2

While some nursing homes provide good care, still some residents are neglected and/or abused everyday. These frail and vulnerable citizens cannot fend for themselves; they need each and every one of us to come to their aid. I CARE is a group of volunteers dedicated to improving the quality of life for people residing in nursing homes in a twelve-county area in central Illinois. Our mission is to protect, defend and advocate for residents' rights and preserve the dignity of each individual who is now or who will be a resident of any nursing home in our area. For information, call I CARE at 1-800-842-8538 or visit I CARE's web site at www.icare.ws.

PSA #3

"Our volunteers make a difference". That is the motto of I CARE, a long-term care ombudsman program. Each day, I CARE's volunteer advocates promote

residents' rights in nursing homes by visiting residents and assisting them with any concerns or problems they may have. Help I CARE protect and promote the rights of nursing home residents by becoming a volunteer advocate today. If you would like to volunteer for this worthwhile mission or would like information, call I CARE at 1-800-842-8538 or visit I CARE's web site at www.icare.ws.

III. Educational Seminars

What is an educational seminar/family council?

An educational seminar is a public forum for residents, families and all peoples from the general public interested in long-term care to meet and discuss the underlying problems for residents in long-term care facilities. Educational seminars are conducted at the community level.

These seminars provide an arena for families to speak openly, without the fear of retaliation from nursing homes about problems they continue to experience within facilities.

Educational seminars are established so concerned citizens can come together and work to advocate for change within the current long-term care system. This group can provide information on problems that occur within facilities and propose recommendations to administrators, owners and local and state government officials to foster positive change within long-term care.

I CARE's hope is that these educational seminars will develop into local family councils.

Educational seminar/family council resources

- Educational seminar press release
- Educational seminar agenda

**EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR ON HOW TO
ASSURE QUALITY NURSING HOME CARE**

I CARE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Name (800) 842-8538

City, IL, Month Day, Year - Illinois Community Advocates for Residents' Empowerment (I CARE), a long-term care ombudsman program, is conducting a seminar for families and friends of nursing home residents entitled, "**So You Want to Change Nursing Home Conditions?**" The seminar is to be held (Day, Month Date, Year at the Location, Address, City) from (time) to (time). The seminar will focus on how to use resident's rights in state and federal law to assure quality of care for residents and how families can organize to be a powerful force in improving nursing home care.

A resident within a long-term care facility maintains the basic constitutional and civil rights assured to all citizens. Fundamental rights guaranteed to every resident are:

- The right to choice and autonomy to the maximum extent possible;
- The right to safety and good care to assure that residents achieve the highest practical level of functioning and well being possible;
- The right to clear and complete information about medical conditions and treatment; and
- The right to participate in the care plan conference that specifies what care the facility will provide.

(Advocate's name), volunteer advocate, I CARE Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, a Department on Aging program, will conduct the seminar. All families, residents' representatives of nursing homes or other long-term care representatives are invited to attend. Prior registration would be appreciated. Please call advocate's name at advocate number or 1-800-842-8538.

SO YOU WANT TO CHANGE NURSING HOME CONDITIONS?

educational seminar

- Federal and state law protects residents' rights and ensures residents have the right to quality care and a quality of life at the highest possible level.
- Problems arise even in the best of nursing homes-SO BE PREPARED!
- A strong advocate should speak up on the residents' behalf to ensure the residents' rights are protected.
- Why do problems continue to persist in nursing homes, even in nursing homes that are supposedly "good" nursing homes? According to Nursing Homes: Getting Good Care There:

The answer is: MONEY and POLITICS

- Nursing homes are a big business, \$3.7 billion per year in the State of Illinois.
- The business interests of nursing home proprietors (those who want to drive up cost in care) and those who pay the bills (families and the government) have a continuous tug of war.
- Nursing homes are extremely profitable. With nationwide occupancy rates over 90 percent nationwide and with the Government as the primary payor, nursing homes have a guaranteed source of cash flow.
- Nursing homes charge private pay residents whatever the home deems is an appropriate cost.
- Long-term care facilities underpay dedicated staff.
- Nursing homes may pay high consultant fees to related companies, or subsidiaries that provide management, dietary or other services to the homes they own.
- The reason that nursing homes cannot provide more staff, better food and better care for the residents is because of poor leadership.
- Government officials receive campaign contributions from nursing home associations and are unaware that bad care exists within long-term care facilities.

The only way to bring about reformation within long-term care is for consumers to become actively involved and demand quality care.

- Consumers have strength in numbers. Become involved within the nursing homes' resident and family councils. If councils are not provided or promoted, work with the nursing home staff and administrator to create them.
- Speak with other residents and families about problems they have experienced.
- Promote the I CARE program and its services. I CARE is mandated by federal and state law to protect, defend and advocate for residents' and families' rights. Also, I CARE's services are **CONFIDENTIAL** and **FREE**.
- Speak with the Illinois Department of Public Health surveyors while they are in the home.
- Ask facility staff and management to encourage independence for residents, it is fundamental for good care. **POOR CARE COSTS MORE!**
 1. Lack of toileting and exercise leads to urinary incontinence. Cost: \$3.26 billion for consequences of incontinence, skin irritation, bedsores, urinary tract infections and hospitalizations.
 2. Poor hydration, nutrition, mobility and cleanliness. Cost: \$1.2 billion for treating preventable pressure ulcers
 3. Use of chemical restraints instead of activities is a major cause of falls. Cost: \$2.6 billion for hip fractures.
 4. Poor care leads to excess hospitalizations. Cost: \$942.5 million for hospitalizations that could be eliminated. It is estimated that 48 percent of nursing home hospitalizations are caused by poor care.
- Maintain open communication with staff.

How to improve nursing home conditions checklist

- Respect the dignity and rights of your relative or loved one.
- Provide information about your relative to staff.
- Ask questions and be involved. Work with nursing home staff to support quality care.
- Seek support from nursing home staff such as the social worker, the director of nursing or the care plan coordinator.
- Learn about the contents of current federal and state laws and regulations and practices for good nursing home care.
- Work with I CARE so we may assist you in resolving nursing home problems.
- Tell IDPH surveyors what you have experienced when they make their annual inspections.
- Share your experiences with people around you.

This information in this paper is from *Nursing Homes: Getting Good Care There*, The National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing

Home Reform, 1996.

IV. Caring Partnerships

Community Caring Partners

A Caring Partnership is an agreement to promote meaningful access to the long-term care ombudsman program.

The goal of the Caring Partnerships are:

- A better informed public;
- More volunteers for the I CARE program; and
- Increased financial support for the program.

Local church or civic organizations agree to contribute to the ombudsman program by providing its membership with the following information:

- The rights of residents in long-term care facilities;
- The need for residents and families to know the residents' rights;
- The I CARE program serves residents through local volunteers; and
- Information about the need for donations to the program to support the recruitment, training and recognition of local advocates.

Resources

- Caring Partnership agreement
- Caring Partnership certificate
- Individual Inserts for Newsletters/Bulletins of Churches/Organizations



A long-term care ombudsman program

A Caring Partnership Agreement

to Provide Long-Term Care Facility Residents Meaningful Access to Ombudsman Services
In _____ County

Whereas, residents in nursing homes need to be informed about their rights to safety, dignity and quality of care,

Whereas, residents in nursing homes often feel helpless and powerless,

Whereas, residents in nursing homes need visitors to enhance their self esteem,

Whereas, as protectors of residents' rights, ombudsmen are trained to identify residents' concerns and problems,

Whereas, residents in nursing homes need to know that the community cares about them,

Whereas, the federal government envisioned community partnerships as a way of making certain that residents receive care that will allow them to reach their maximum potential health, their right under the law;

Therefore, it is resolved that a **Caring Partnership** is established Between _____ and _____

(Church or Q& Organization)

Under this agreement, the _____ will make its membership aware of the following information:

The rights of residents,

The need for residents and families to know the residents' rights,

The I CARE-Project Advocate Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program which serves residents through local volunteers,

The need for local volunteers to act as advocates, and

Information about the need for donations to the program to support the recruitment, training and recognition of local ombudsmen.

Other _____

Signed this _____ day of _____, 19 _____

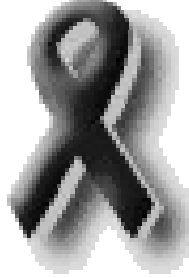
Church or Civic Organization

RTA Unit/AARP Chapter

620 North Walnut, Springfield, IL 62702. (217) 523-8419. FAX (217) 523-8493.

www.icare.ws

Caring *partnership*



I CARE

Illinois Community Advocates for Residents'
Empowerment

a long-term care ombudsman program

1-800-842-8538

www.icare.ws

I CARE,
a long-term care ombudsman program,
in cooperation with

SAMPLE

and

SAMPLE

have made a Caring Partnership
to protect, defend and advocate for the
rights of long-term care residents in
SAMPLE COUNTY
DECEMBER, 2004

*SAMPLE
LEAD ADVOCATE*

SAMPLE

Individual Inserts for Newsletters/Bulletins of Churches/Organizations

I CARE protects the rights of long-term care facility residents in _____ County. This program is provided by volunteer advocates who go into nursing homes and other long-term care facilities on a monthly basis. This protection service is free to the residents and their families. If you have a concern or complaint about facility care, call 1-800-842-8538.

.....

I CARE is a Department on Aging Program that protects the rights of residents in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. Residents have the right to safety and good care to maintain their health at the highest practical level of functioning and well being possible. If you have questions about long-term care, call 1-800-842-8538.

.....

Volunteer advocates visit residents in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities in _____ County through I CARE. More volunteers are needed. All persons who "have a heart" and are trained for Department on Aging certification can do this important work! Call I CARE to find out more about the program, call 1-800-842-8538.

.....

Residents in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities have the right of choice and autonomy to the maximum extent possible. Although there are many caring people who work in nursing homes, residents may not be afforded the right of choice because of lack of staff. To find out more about resident's rights, call I CARE (1-800-842-8538).

.....

I CARE needs volunteers to protect the rights of residents in long-term care facilities. If you have an interest in older people and can donate at least one hour a month, you can do this important work. Call I CARE to schedule your training at 1-800-842-8538. You will be glad you did.

.....

I CARE, a Department on Aging Program, protects rights of residents in nursing homes. More volunteers are needed to do this real ministry. Call 1-800-8428538 for more information.

V. Public hearings

What is a public hearing?

A public hearing is a unique way to have communities participate in shaping public policy. These "forums" are utilized in understanding what citizens, advocacy groups and other concerned parties have to say about a particular issue by allowing them the opportunity to participate in democracy at the most rudimentary level—by assembling and expressing themselves. Public forums are used to gather information that shall be analyzed and disseminated in a report to the public.

People involved in a public hearing

The moderator—Controls the tone of the hearing by introducing each testifier in accordance with the timekeeper.

The panel—Individuals investigating the questioned issue (panels typically do not exceed more than ten members).

The timekeeper—A person who tracks time increments for each participant.

The media—Newspaper, radio and television reporters.

The testifiers—Includes anyone that has a relevant interest in the issue. (It is an encouraged practice to request testifiers to include written remarks with their testimony for a more detailed and accurate account; however, it is not required.)

Arranging a public hearing

1. Define a clear-cut purpose for conducting the public forum.
2. Reserve a location for the event that has adequate spacing for panelists, testifiers and audience members. Sites that often contain rooms large enough for a public event include libraries, government office buildings, churches and community banks.
3. Once a location is reserved, send a confirmation letter to the facility liaison to thank them for their assistance and to verify the reserved date.
4. Ensure people are aware of the public hearing by distributing a concise press release to local newspapers, television and radio stations for announcement of the event. The press release should contain only relevant information regarding the hearing (i.e. time, date, purpose, location, etc.). Also, provide a contact person within the release for anyone who has any questions regarding the hearing.
5. Contact the editors and producers of local media outlets by phone, mail or through a personal appointment inviting them to attend the hearing. Journalists are interested in how the general public feels about a particular "social" issue. Public forums go beyond the typical polls because it conveys human interest stories through gripping and emotional testimonies. Again,

- follow-up any conversations with a letter of reminder of the event and a letter of thanks.
6. As the date of the public hearing approaches, get in touch with panelists, participants and media contacts by letter and by phone to remind them of the event. These simple steps of correspondence and organization should assure a worthwhile hearing.

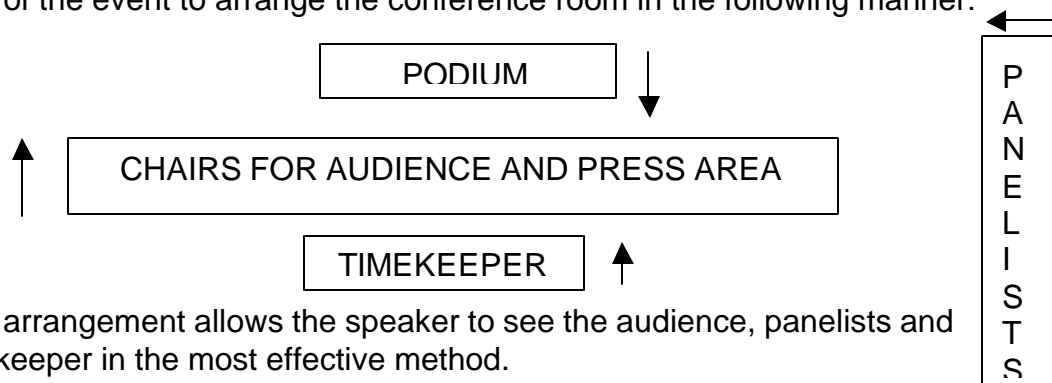
Materials needed for the public hearing

See Appendix for examples of denoted items:

- Agenda
- Sign-in sheets
- Timecards
- Guidelines for the hearing
- Name cards of the panelists
- Press packets for the media-Press packets should include a press release of the event, any background information on the convener's of the hearing, the hearing guidelines and a copy of the purpose of the hearing.
- Background information for the purpose of the event

The `Big Day'

1. Be sure to arrive at the public hearing site at least one hour before the scheduled time of the event to arrange the conference room in the following manner:



This arrangement allows the speaker to see the audience, panelists and timekeeper in the most effective method.

2. As people begin to arrive, have them register at a designated sign-in desk so the moderator may keep track of participants.
3. The moderator should begin the hearing on time with an introduction of the panelists and a brief description of what the panelists hope to accomplish with the hearing.
4. The moderator should point out the location of the timekeeper and review the hearing guidelines for those in attendance (the moderator needs to clarify that in public hearings, only panelists may ask questions directly to the testifier-this is not a public dialogue between the audience members and participants.)
5. The timekeeper should keep precise time for each speaker but, if the situation demands, allow flexibility for the testifier to finish his/her comments.
6. The testifiers are to speak directly to the panelists and audience members and may submit written testimony to the panel. Once their testimony is complete, he/she should return to their seat while the moderator introduces the next witness.
7. Once the testimonies have concluded, the moderator should thank the members of the panel, the audience, the media and testifiers for their participation in the closing remarks.

Follow-up

At the conclusion of the hearing, follow-up the event with a press release to the local papers concerning the proceedings. Convey any important highlights or findings from the hearing. Also, send a note of thanks to those in attendance thanking them for their participation. A copy of the follow-up press release should be attached to any correspondence regarding the public hearing.

Public hearing resources

- Public hearing press release
- Public hearing agenda
- Public hearing timecards
- Public hearing guidelines

PURPOSE FOR PUBLIC HEARING**I CARE NEWS RELEASE****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****CONTACT: Name Telephone #**

City, IL, Month Day, Year -- *Insert convener's name* is sponsoring a public forum for Illinois citizens to voice their concerns *insert purpose*.

The hearing will be held *day, month*, from *time* p.m. to *time* p.m. in , *location, address, in city*, according to *panelist, panelist title*.

"Since the inception of *the insert convener's name*, seldom has there ever been an arena where families, advocacy groups, concerned professionals and the general public could communicate their opinions about *insert issue*-until now," said *panelist*.

"This is a unique opportunity to discuss issue and make suggestions for changes in State laws, regulations and policy" said *panelist*.

Each person or group will be allowed five minutes to speak before a panel. *Convener's name* requests participants to prepare a written statement; however, *convener's name* is willing to accommodate those who do not have written remarks.

Persons interested in testifying at the public hearing should *contact's name* no later than *day, month, year*.

Agenda sample

public hearing agenda
date
time

- 1 General welcome and introduction of panel
 1. Moderator's name and title
 2. Panelist's names
 - a. Name
 - b. Name
- 2 Testimonies from families, concerned citizens, advocacy groups
- 3 Closing

1

m i n u t e

l e f t

Your time

is UP!

Public hearing guidelines

Thank you for taking time to testify at this public hearing to *insert purpose*.

In order to ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak before the panel, we ask you read and follow the guidelines listed below.

Testimony

- The timekeeper, with an introduction, shall cue each speaker.
- Please keep your testimony to the allotted time of five (5) minutes. If a prior speaker makes a point you were planning to make, please adjust your oral comments to avoid repetition.
- Please submit a written copy of your which allows you to state your concerns in greater detail than your oral comments. *Insert public hearing conveyer's name* will accept written testimony *insert date*. You may mail your testimony to the following address:

Conveyer's name and address

Time

- All testimonials are limited to a **maximum of 5 minutes**.
- Speakers, please be aware of the following cues:
 - A sign will be shown indicating "**ONE MINUTE TO GO**". Please present your final comments in the final minute.
 - At the end of the five minutes, a sign indicating "**TIME IS UP**" will be shown. Speakers need to conclude their statements at this time.

Thank you for your testimony and cooperation.

A summary of your testimony will be mailed to you.

VI. Legislative and advocacy initiatives

Many problems in long-term care facilities can be attributed to the overwhelming and complex systemic issues that continue to plague the industry. Egregious problems are only exacerbated by poor management practices, lack of unqualified staff and uninformed public officials who continue attempt to improve care through ad hoc resolutions.

The only way to assure quality care for residents is for families and advocates to unite and work together with long-term care industry representatives and elected politicians to foster in a new era of long-term care within Illinois.

An advocate should visit a legislator each legislative session and invite the state official to tour nursing homes within your district during second shift hours when nursing homes are understaffed to see the conditions in which Illinois' most frail and vulnerable people reside.

Legislative resource

- Letter to legislator

Your name
Address
Telephone Number

Date

The Honorable *Name*
State Senator/Representative -District # *Number*
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Senator/Representative *Name*:

Within the State of Illinois, there is ample evidence that the present situation of ad hoc solutions from the state legislature to address complex nursing home issues has not kept residents in too many facilities from being neglected.

Serious systemic problems exist within too many nursing homes and residents' rights are violated every day. According to a report by the Illinois Department of Public Health, nearly 85 percent of long-term care facilities have conditions in which there is a potential for harm.

Families, residents and taxpayers need to have more of a voice and involvement at the State level in promoting necessary change within the long-term care system and promote quality care for residents.

The only mandated board that is available to families to publicly discuss this issue is the LongTerm Care Facility Advisory Board under the auspices of the Illinois Department of Public Health. This present Board was established to provide advice on laws, regulations and policies of the Illinois Department of Public Health in regards to long-term care facilities within Illinois. However, this Board has not focused on the investigation of quality care issues for residents by fostering and encouraging public discourse from residents, families and advocacy groups about relevant long-term care issues for residents in nursing homes.

Also, the membership of the Board needs to be changed to have equitable and impartial representation. Residents, physicians, nurses, gerontological higher education programs, the general public, families and long-term care representatives all need to be involved in promoting systemic change within nursing homes. It is imperative to have an objective opinion when dealing with these complex and intricate issues of long-term care facilities.

Changing this Board to a Quality Care Board would be a fundamental first step in fostering a positive response to the underlying problems for Illinois' most frail and vulnerable citizens and the protection of their health, safety and welfare in long-term care facilities.

I believe government functions best when the People shape laws, regulations and policies.

Currently House Bill 2627, assigned to a working subcommittee within the Senate Public Health committee, would amend the current Long-Term Care Facility Advisory Board to a consumer oriented board. I ask that you work with Senator Dave Syverson and Senate President Pate Philip to get this legislation to Governor Ryan during veto session as soon as possible and passed into law.

Yours in service,

Name, Concerned citizen