A Helping Hand
Navigating your way in your new home
(Nursing Facility Edition)
Home Administrator
Name: ________________________________
Phone Number: ________________________

Local Ombudsman
Name: ________________________________
Phone Number: ________________________

PEER Contact
Name: ________________________________
Phone Number: ________________________

All communication with your local Ombudsman and PEER is FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.
Welcome to the Helping Hand guide that will assist you in navigating your way through your Nursing Facility. This guide was prepared to help you become more informed about your new home.

If you have questions, you can speak to your home’s administrator, their designated staff person, and/or your local Ombudsman.

LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

The Pennsylvania Department of Aging contracts with 52 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) to provide Ombudsman services throughout the commonwealth. Ombudsman services are confidential and available at no charge.
OMBUDSMAN

An Ombudsman is a trained individual who helps protect the rights of Pennsylvanians who receive long-term care services.

Ombudsmen provide information, answer questions, investigate complaints and offer assistance in resolving problems about quality of care or treatment.

PEER PROGRAM

PEER (Pennsylvania’s Empowered Expert Residents) is a program initiated in Pennsylvania where residents of long term care facilities are trained to advocate for residents rights, quality of life and care issues within the facility.

These specially trained residents are called PEERs and undergo ten (10) hours of specialized training in resident rights, self-resolution, and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program.

Ask your home’s administrator or your local Ombudsman if there is a PEER Program in your facility.
All nursing facilities must be licensed to operate in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) is the state agency that licenses, inspects and investigates complaints in nursing facilities. DOH visits the facility at least once each year to conduct an inspection. You may review the results of your home’s most recent inspection at any time. Ask a facility staff member where the results are posted.

Speak with your nursing facility administrator or designated staff person if you believe your rights are not respected. If your concern is not resolved, speak with your local ombudsman or a PEER.

You may contact DOH at any time with a concern. They will investigate and keep your information confidential.

The Statewide Department of Health Complaint Hotline number is:

1-800-254-5164
As a Resident, you have the Right to:

• Be informed of your rights in writing, and receive a copy of your rights

• Be informed, in writing, of the facility’s services and charges

• Leave and return to the facility at reasonable times

• Use your own clothing and possessions

• Receive visitors

• Telephone access and privacy

• Receive and send unopened mail

• Be free of retaliation from complaints

• Be free from mental, physical, and sexual abuse, exploitation, neglect, and involuntary seclusion

• Be treated with dignity and respect

• Receive 30 days advance written notice of the facility’s intent to terminate your residency and the reason for termination

• Be free from chemical (drug) and physical restraints
• Request and receive assistance in relocating
• Freely participate in any religious, social, or community activity of your choosing

For a more complete explanation of your rights, contact your local Ombudsman.

RESIDENT COUNCIL

The resident council is YOUR organization. It is a place where you can get information, voice your concerns, seek assistance with problems, and make suggestions for improvements. Take advantage of the opportunity to become involved in the decision-making process at the facility. Check your activity schedule for time and place.

If your facility participates in the PEER program, one or more resident representatives have received special training and information regarding your rights, self-resolution, and the Ombudsman. Ask your social worker or Ombudsman about the PEER program and its availability at this facility.
VISITORS, PRIVACY, AND YOUR ROOM

You may receive visitors at any time. You should have the opportunity to meet with your visitors in private. Ask the staff where those private areas are located in the facility.

EVERYONE should knock on your door before entering. You have the right to use the phone in private. You also have the right to refuse visitors. Sometimes other residents may become disoriented and enter your room unintentionally. Ring your call bell and ask the staff to assist you with the situation. If the problem persists, discuss the situation with your social worker. Ask about removable “stop strips” that may prove to be a solution to the problem.

If you have a roommate, this may be a new experience for you and it may be a challenge. Sometimes, despite everyone’s best efforts, roommates are incompatible. You may request a room change. Again, speak with the social worker. You should also know that the facility can’t change your room without giving you advance notice and an orientation to your new room.

Your social worker is: ________________
PERSONAL PROPERTY

When you arrive, your facility will inventory your belongings, ask for a copy of the inventory and keep it in a safe place. Update your personal inventory sheet when you receive new items, especially after holidays and birthdays. If you dispose of an item or send it to storage away from the facility, delete that item from your inventory. A current, accurate personal inventory sheet will help you prove ownership if an item needs to be replaced.

To keep track of your clothing, ask if your facility offers a service to identify your possessions. If not, use a permanent marker to place your name on all of your clothing. If clothing does not return from laundry, ask the laundry director to fill out a missing property report. You should receive a copy of that report. If an item does not return within a reasonable time, ask the social worker to have the facility replace the item.
Jewelry should be listed on your personal inventory sheet. It is not advisable to keep expensive jewelry or cash in your room unless a locked area is provided for storage. The facility must ensure the security of your personal possessions.

Other personal items should also be on your inventory sheet with identifying numbers and your identifying label. Check with your facility about their identification policy.

If the items need to be repaired, contact:

Laundry______________________________________

Maintenance ________________________________

Other________________________________________

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CARE PLAN

An individualized care plan is written for every resident of a nursing facility. It is intended to act as a guide to your care. It spells out what your needs are and how the facility will meet those needs. Your care plan should list problems, goals and how the goals will be met. You should be actively involved in the development of your care plan. Ask the social worker to inform you when your care plan meeting will be held. Plan to attend.

Care plan meetings are held shortly after admission and every three months after that. Additional care plan meetings should be scheduled if there is a significant change in your health. Representatives from nursing, therapies, activities, social services, etc. will attend.

Share your goals, concerns and preferences with the team. If you do not agree with what the facility wants to do or how they want to proceed, you do **NOT** have to accept the plan. Feel free to ask for a copy of your care plan. This will help you know what to expect from the facility staff. You should be invited to attend every care plan meeting. You may designate a family member or your power of
attorney to attend with or in place of you. If you have any questions about the care plan process, ask to see the social worker.

**DISCHARGE**

If your plan is to return home, you should be actively involved in developing a discharge plan. The therapy, nursing and social service staff should be speaking with you regarding your plan. Prior to discharge, an evaluation should be done to determine what type of care and equipment you will need. With your consent, the facility should help you by making a referral to the home health care provider of your choice. They should assist with orders for needed medical equipment and arrangements with your chosen provider for delivery. The facility will also provide information concerning payment for those services and your responsibilities. They should also provide information about local community services that may help with those expenses. If the facility pursues a discharge action against you they must notify you of their intent to discharge you. You have rights to appeal and due process during an involuntary discharge. Please contact your local ombudsman program for assistance with discharge issues.
PHYSICIAN SERVICES

You have the option of selecting or changing a physician at any time during your stay in this facility. You should know who your physician is and have the opportunity to meet with him/her as needed. It is the obligation of the physician or the physician’s assistant to see you at least every 30 days for the first three months and then every 60 days, unless your medical condition requires more frequent visits.

You should have the opportunity to meet with your physician privately for your exam and have the ability to ask any questions that you may have. You have the right to refuse any treatment and/or medication.

The licensed nursing staff should be able to provide you with the information you need. They can also contact your doctor for you when needed.

If you have any problems with your nursing care service, you should ask to see the director of nursing. Your director of nursing is:
MEALS

Ask your dietary director about the selection process in your facility. Ask about your menu options and tell the dietician about your food preferences and dietary restrictions. Ask about snack selections and the option of eating in your room or in the dining room. There are always two choices for each meal. If a meal arrives cold, ask the staff to reheat it. If a meal arrives that is not what you ordered or wanted, inform the staff and ask for an alternate meal.

Your dietary director is:
ACTIVITIES

You have choices about your daily schedule and activities. You do not have to be in or out of bed at any specific time. You may choose to sleep in or stay up late. The facility should develop a daily routine based on your preferences. Communicating this with the staff is key.

You should be provided with an activity schedule for the month. Attend the ones that appeal to you. You do not have to attend any if that is your preference. However, in a practical sense, it is good to get out of your room. Staying active will help you adjust to your new surroundings.

If there is an activity you enjoy that is not offered by the facility, ask to speak with the activity director to see if the facility can honor your request. Independent activities are also encouraged.
If you are a reader, or have a craft or hobby (crocheting, woodworking, etc.) the activity staff should be able to help you obtain the necessary materials.

If you choose not to participate in an activity, this is your choice. You may prefer to take a nap and rest if you are tired. If you need assistance to get in/out of bed, use your call bell to summon help.

The activity director is:
TRANSPORTATION

There may be times when you will want to leave the facility for a doctor appointment, medical tests, or a special occasion/activity with family or friends.

There are transportation options available to you depending on your physical needs and your destination. Speak with the social worker whenever you need assistance in scheduling transportation. Let the social worker know as far in advance as possible before you need transportation.

The facility should never schedule transportation for you without your knowledge/consent. If you have an appointment, the facility must inform you in advance of the appointment, the method of transportation, and any cost that you may incur. You can travel with family or friends if you desire and are physically able. If this is not an option for you, there are public transportation providers that you may be able to use.

For transportation services contact:
FINANCES

Payment for nursing home care can be very complicated. There are a variety of insurances that may pay for all or part of your care. There are state subsidized options that assist you with your bill if you are uninsured or under-insured and cannot afford the nursing home costs.

There are several resources to assist you in understanding your particular situation and what options are available to you. Ask to see the social worker or the business office manager. They should be able to explain your coverage and your uncovered costs. All of this should be done prior to or at the time of admission. Sometimes, though, it is difficult to absorb all of the information presented at that time and additional concerns may occur to you after you have been admitted.

The business office manager is:
If you have questions on your Medicare coverage, you may contact an APPRISE counselor. The APPRISE program is a free health insurance counseling program to help adults with Medicare.

**APPRISE Toll-Free 1-800-783-7067**

**WE ARE HERE FOR YOU**

You should always be treated with respect and dignity. If you feel threatened, frightened, or believe you have been mistreated, report it immediately.

Contact your home’s administrator or your local Ombudsman at:
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<th>HELPLINES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Aging</td>
<td>717-783-1550</td>
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<tr>
<td>PA Link to Aging &amp; Disability Resources</td>
<td>1-866-286-3636</td>
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<tr>
<td>APPRISE Insurance Counseling</td>
<td>1-800-783-7067</td>
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<tr>
<td>PACE/PACENET</td>
<td>1-800-225-7223</td>
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<td>Elder Abuse</td>
<td>1-800-490-8505</td>
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<td>Property Tax/Rent Rebate</td>
<td>1-888-222-9190</td>
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<td>Department of Health Complaint</td>
<td>1-800-254-5164</td>
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<td>Medicare</td>
<td>1-800-633-4227</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Law Helpline</td>
<td>1-877-727-7529</td>
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

aging.pa.gov

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