

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to support SB714. It is a travesty that assisted living, residential care and memory communities have no requirements for minimum staffing. As a long-term care ombudsman in Oregon I have been to numerous facilities and must report that our elders are neglected when there is not enough staff on duty.

- I got a call one evening from a resident in a residential care facility who relied on heavy doses of pain medicine because his body had been mangled in a car accident. He said a new med tech had just stopped by and said, "Sorry, we forgot to order your meds. Have a good night." He was furious and looked throughout the facility for someone to help him. He found no one. He called me and I called every phone number I had inside that facility; after an hour of constant calling I found a nurse. She was shocked that he had no medicine and made arrangements to have his medicine sent over immediately from an all-night pharmacy.
- At a memory care unit a family member told me that during the day, when her mother was in her room and needing help to change her soiled clothing, she fell. The resident waited hours but no one came in to check on her. Finally, she began banging on a table she had in her room. Eventually a staff member heard her banging and rescued her from the floor and changed her clothing.
- I entered an assisted living and found no one at the front desk. I found no one in any of the hallways or main room. I encountered a confused resident who did not know how to get back to his room so we walked together to find someone to tell us his room number and then walk him there. This man had left lunch to return to his room and it was at least an hour later when I found him.
- Some of the memory care facilities do not keep their residents clean. They have food spots on their clothing. Their fingernails are long and dirty. Their hair is dirty. The staff does not want to take the time to do this because they have other work to do. But this is a dignity issue. These residents deserve to be kept clean. And if this is what I can see, I worry about what care they are not getting that I cannot see.

As an ombudsman in Arizona and Florida I encountered better staffing ratios than in Oregon.

From an economic standpoint, cutting staff is the fastest way to cut costs. However, it is the staffing that determines how well our loved ones are cared for. The really good facilities have more staff than required; their staff is paid better and gets regular training and professional supervision.

Regards,

Janice Johnson
Volunteer
Oregon Long-term Care Ombudsman Program
Janice@aposner.net