



Safeguarding the Nursing Home Environment: The Ombudsman's Role



The Center for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) states that nursing homes should work to provide an environment that is “homelike”.

A homelike environment includes one that allows resident personal items such as photos, artwork, and even personal furnishings. This supports the overall well-being of residents.

A nursing home must also ensure a safe environment, one that is clean, comfortable, and allows residents to receive care and services safely and maximizes a resident's independence.

Ombudsman Action Steps

You have an important role in safeguarding the nursing home environment while preserving resident rights. Assist the nursing home community in balancing a homelike living environment with one that is safe, uncluttered, and sanitary by:

- Observing & asking residents and staff regarding homelike & personal as well as safety & sanitary items listed below.
- Sharing what you observed and learned with administration and staff, offering assistance to reach resolutions.

Homelike & Personal

- Personal items that provide self-expression & individuality are encouraged and supported by the nursing home.
- Lighting is comfortable & sufficient to allow residents and staff to do tasks.
- Limited “institutional” odors and appearance (example- nursing stations with barriers).
- Temperature overall is considered comfortable by residents.

Safety & Sanitary

- Sufficient closet & storage space for personal items to provide access for care and prevent falls.
- Daily cleaning & disinfection of care equipment & frequently touched items is documented and monitored regularly.
- Residents & staff can explain who cleans items, how, and the frequency.
- Laundry is transported, processed, and stored to prevent germ spread.

Want to know more? Contact your nursing home advocate or send an email to geriatrics@unthsc.edu

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