



Press Release

New Coalition Presses for Quality Standards

Consumers and advocates join the fight to protect Pennsylvania families from inadequate regulations

PHILADELPHIA, PA—(July 7, 2008)—A new organization of consumers, family members and advocates for the elderly and persons with disabilities is pushing for quality standards in Pennsylvania state regulations covering assisted living facilities. The Pennsylvania Assisted Living Consumer Alliance (PALCA) formed this year to ensure that new licensing rules will protect elderly and persons with disabilities. About 50,000 people in Pennsylvania currently live in facilities that may call themselves assisted living facilities.

It's essential that we get these regulations right to protect all of Pennsylvania's families," said Alissa Halperin, Senior Attorney and Deputy Director of Policy Advocacy at the Pennsylvania Health Law Project, the organization leading the efforts of the Alliance. "We are committed to championing and supporting individual rights and quality care for everyone." The Pennsylvania Health Law Project is primarily using operating support provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts to fund the campaign.

The Pennsylvania General Assembly last year passed a bill to license the fast-growing assisted living industry. The regulations are expected to be released this month, and the public will have a chance to comment on them before they are finalized. Until now, state regulations have lumped assisted living facilities together with a wide range of homes for the elderly and disabled. "The passage of Act 56 was a great first step for consumers," said Halperin, "but now we need to make sure that the law isn't window dressing. We need regulations that will protect the residents' rights to access their own doctors and caregivers, to have adequate living space and to be served by appropriately trained staff."

Assisted living has emerged in the past generation to house people who are not so sick that they require a nursing home. But they generally need more help with bathing, dressing, medication management and other basic care needs than may be provided in personal care homes. Assisted living has been a marketplace phenomenon for consumers who want independence, privacy, and choice, but who also want the ability to "age in place" - meaning they will not have to move when their care needs increase. In the past, however, state regulations have been so minimal and enforcement has been so lax that numerous reports of bad outcomes and, even, tragic results for residents have been published.

The assisted living industry will be caring for increasing numbers of Pennsylvania residents and we need to make sure these facilities are places where we confidently can entrust the care of our

mother, husband or grandfather,” said Diane Menio of the Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly. “Thus far, the quality of care has varied immensely from facility to facility, with the differences depending far more on the intent of the facility owner than on meaningful standards for ensuring good care. We need solid requirements coupled with meaningful enforcement to ensure that quality care is available.”

“PALCA has been set up to give consumers a voice in developing state regulations,” says Halperin, as she invites residents and their family members to get involved. “Those who are most affected need a seat at the table.”

PALCA members have met monthly since January and regularly talk to state regulators in the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. The Alliance consists of numerous individual consumers and family members as well as several local and statewide organizations. The statewide and local organizations participating in PALCA include:

The Pennsylvania Health Law Project (www.phlp.org)
The Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE) (<http://www.carie.org>)
The Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania (<http://drnpa.org>)
Mental Health Association in Pennsylvania (MHAPA) (<http://www.mhapa.org>)
Mental Health Association of Southeastern PA (<http://www.mhasp.org>)
The National MS Society—PA chapters (<http://pae.nationalmssociety.org>)
Liberty Resources (<http://www.libertyresources.org>)
Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council (<http://www.pasilc.org>)
Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging (<http://www.p4a.org>)
SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania (<http://www.seiuhealthcarepa.org>)
Elder Law Section of the Pennsylvania Bar Association (<http://www.pabar.org/public/sections/elderlaw>)
Community Legal Services Elderly Law Project (www.clsphila.org)
PA Brain Injury Network (www.abin-pa.org)
Pennsylvania Council on Independent Living (www.pcil.net)
Pennsylvania HomeCare Association (www.pahomecare.org)
PA Statewide Independent Living Council (www.pasilc.org)
United Cerebral Palsy (www.cup.org)
Speaking for Ourselves (www.speaking.org)
Southwestern Pennsylvania Partnership for Aging (www.swppa.org)
Vision for Equality (www.visionforequality.org)

The Pennsylvania Assisted Living Consumer Alliance encourages you to share your Assisted Living experience with us at www.paassistedlivingconsumeralliance.org and to share your opinions on the proposed regulations with policymakers this summer.

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