



December 3, 2007

Wisconsin State Journal

Dear Editor,

The Wisconsin Assisted Living Association (WALA) read with great interest the cover story in the December 2, 2007 Wisconsin State Journal on assisted living. WALA, as the largest assisted living association in the state, responds with concern for quality care in our growing industry.

As the story mentioned, resident care in assisted living overall in Wisconsin is excellent and citations are dramatically decreasing. The Bureau of Assisted Living (BAL) should be complimented on implementing creative ways of regulating the industry to meet its goal of quality care for all while doing so with reduced resources. Many state agencies seem to be facing equal challenges to do more with less.

The state's abbreviated inspections allow the surveyors to focus on the providers who need additional oversight and technical assistance when possible and citations when not. These are just a couple of the tools BAL is using to improve care for assisted living residents in our state while still meeting state budget demands. BAL has reduced its backlog of complaints from 600 to 125, many of them unsubstantiated after investigation.

WALA also has increased its programming to meet this challenge with additional education and training for providers. We provided 28 days of statewide training in 2007, taking the training to the providers. In 2008, we will expand to more web-based education, training and best practices for easy access for providers statewide.

The regulations for Community-Based Residential Facilities (CBRFs) are in the process of revision. WALA has been a major stakeholder and leader in the process to improve resident care training and oversight. In order to insure that new facility administrators are better prepared for managing an assisted living operation, WALA is recommending a new thorough and comprehensive assisted living-specific, state-approved training program. Such a program will help to provide the skills, information and regulatory understanding to meet *and exceed* state standards. We encourage all those who desire improved services for our seniors to support this training program in the public hearings soon to be held. Help us to create a tool to meet the challenges mentioned in the story.

The process and tools to increase the quality of care in assisted living we expect and demand are achievable.

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