
Consumer Information Guide To Assisted Living in Minnesota

Focus Groups with Key People

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Report prepared for the
Minnesota Department of Health
Compliance Monitoring
Case Mix Review Staff

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Executive Summary

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Compliance Monitoring/Case Mix Review, in response to Minnesota Statutes 2006 Chapter 144G.06 (Assisted Living Services, Uniform Consumer Information Guide), and in its role as a member of the advisory committee charged with recommending a uniform format for the *Consumer Information Guide to Assisted Living in Minnesota*, sponsored a series of two focus groups to review the above Guide.

The *Consumer Information Guide to Assisted Living in Minnesota* is a new document intended for use by persons searching for an assisted living facility (e.g., elderly, Alzheimer's patients, and others) and their family members. The guide's purpose is to provide potential consumers with standardized information so that they can compare facilities along common measurements (like comparing apples to apples).

Case Mix Review Program staff (James Sims, primary division contact, and Janet Nicol) contacted MDH Human Resources Division/Center for Workforce Development (HRM/CWD) staff (Natalie Durbin and Mary Nikshenas) to plan and facilitate a focus group(s) of potential consumers and family members for the purpose of reviewing the *Guide* and providing feedback regarding its format, readability, usability, and overall effectiveness.

It is intended that the focus group findings will be used, to the greatest extent possible, to improve and refine the *Consumer Information Guide to Assisted Living in Minnesota* prior to distributing this Guide to facilities throughout the state of Minnesota (pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 144G.06).

Based on the focus group findings, it is this facilitator's opinion that the Guide will be positively received. Participants made many positive and supportive comments and were appreciative of the Guide as a valuable "first" or "middle" step in their search process. While the focus group recruits were not typical of the intended end users (e.g., consumers and family members about to make a search for assisted living facilities), they did bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the discussion process.

As the focus group sessions progressed, several common themes seemed to develop:

- The facilities need to be instructed in how to fill out the Guide in a uniform fashion (e.g., required fields); this will be helped by the inclusion of more grids rather than "fill-in-the-blank" narratives.
- There may still be issues of standard vs. non-standard information since the facilities are allowed to provide their own addendums.

- There may be issues around the currency/timeliness/accuracy of Guide information, with a potential for lag.
- It is important to stress that housing and services are two different entities; the Guide may need to be reorganized to better emphasize this split.
- It would be helpful to include an Instruction Sheet, Table of Contents, and additional Worksheets.
- The grid/checkbox format was preferred over the narrative paragraph format.
- There is a need for as much detailed cost information as possible.
- There is a strong need for an online (or even paper) Comparison Report/Spreadsheet that will allow consumers/family members to specify search criteria and retrieve information from multiple facilities in a side-by-side format.
- It is important to ensure that people know this Guide is available; it needs to be announced/publicized through multiple venues.
- Many of the suggestions listing in the Findings section of this Report are based on the personal preferences of the specific individuals participating in these two focus group sessions. It may not be possible or practical to incorporate every suggestion.
- The facilitator recommends that all Findings are reviewed and considered for incorporation where possible and feasible. The facilitator also recommends that copies of the revised generic Guide be provided to focus group participants as they requested.