

**caring**  
*for those*  
**you care about**

# Long-Term Care: **Where AARP Stands**

**Y**our health, economic security, and independence are almost certainly important issues to you. Most people feel strongly about continuing to live on their own, with dignity, as they grow older. AARP is working to make sure that older people have the choices they need to live life on their own terms.

AARP reviews existing data, conducts its own research, and surveys members to gather information on their concerns and views. AARP's Board of Directors is tasked with discussing and balancing these perspectives. They hear from renowned experts, elected leaders, representatives of business and industry, critics, and the National Legislative Council, a special advisory body made up of 25 volunteers. AARP's top advocacy priorities include important issues such as health, financial security, independence and long-term care, and consumer protection.

## **Home Care Services**

Many people can stay at home as they age with just a little extra help. But with the growing numbers of older people who need help to live on their own, the demand for quality caregivers is simply more than the supply.

When it comes to home care, AARP wants to strengthen the areas of availability, quality, standards, and accountability. *AARP believes that states*

*should be active in monitoring quality of care and seeing to it that the standards of care are being followed.* Above all, consumers should be able to find and use the many different services that meet their needs if they choose to stay in their homes. AARP supports policies that make high quality at-home care services available to people who need long-term care.

Home care is often the most desired of the many long-term care options, and AARP is committed to making it more available. This means keeping Medicaid strong to help people pay for all care, including nursing home care, medical care, and/or home care services. It also means having enough trained caregivers to provide high-quality at-home services. However, it's not enough to just increase the availability of high-quality services; there must be good ways to monitor this care, with active enforcement when problems are found. Enforcement that includes penalties. People should have a place to go that will handle their complaints and work towards a solution. A trusted place that has information about quality home care services in the community.

## **Nursing Homes**

Deciding on a nursing home can be tough. A nursing home should truly be a place that gives residents good care and compassion, and allows them dignity.



The problem with some nursing homes is that there's too little nursing care, and the facilities don't feel much like home. It all comes down to quality. Obtaining it, maintaining it, and ensuring it. The conditions in which some of our most precious and fragile people are living in this country are quite alarming. Even with strong federal laws in place, study after study has discovered dangerous conditions and critical care problems in many of the nation's nursing homes. *AARP believes these conditions need to be improved and is working hard to see that happen.*

AARP puts residents' rights first. Nursing home residents should be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. That's why AARP supports improved quality standards and increased enforcement of federal and state nursing home laws. That means making sure that there is enough trained staff (nursing staff-resident ratios) taking care of our friends and relatives in nursing homes, inspectors who are properly trained, and tougher licensing requirements that are strongly enforced.

### **Assisted-Living Facilities**

An assisted living facility may be the right choice, but it's hard to select the best for an individual. The services each assisted living facility offers can be quite different. Assisted living facilities usually provide a combination of housing, meals, personal care, social activities, 24-hour supervision, and in some cases, health-related services to older adults who have become unable to live independently. There is no standard for assisted living; some facilities offer

only meals and basic housekeeping while others do more and arrange transportation and many health services. Do more services mean high quality? Not necessarily. And because they offer a higher level of services, assisted living facilities cost more than a board-and-care or group home, and residents usually pay out of their own pocket. With all these choices, one shouldn't be worrying about quality. *AARP believes that quality matters.* Many states have not kept up with the growth of assisted-living facilities. Many regulations are out of date and inappropriate. AARP supports strong state enforcement and review of the laws already on the books. Since licensing standards and enforcement practices vary widely from state to state, AARP believes the **federal** government should encourage the development of supportive housing options, such as assisted living facilities, and take a much stronger role in ensuring their consistent high quality.

AARP represents millions of Americans over the age of 50, including those who are still working, those who have retired, people who have comfortable resources, and those just getting by. Developing public policies that serve all kinds of people in all kinds of situations is a very big challenge. That is why AARP works hard to be thorough. Once a policy is approved, it becomes a guide for all of the activities the AARP staff and volunteers will involve themselves in throughout the year. *AARP believes in consumer rights and quality care.*



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