

**ANNUAL REPORT
FOR
BUNCOMBE COUNTY ADULT CARE HOME COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

REPORTING YEAR: FY 2009 July 2008 – June 2009

CHAIRPERSON: ROBERT PHILLIPS

The Committee would like to have one or more of the Commissioners attend a monthly meeting and to join one of our teams on a facility visit. Your attendance would give you a flavor for what the committee members' encounter during their visits and give us a chance to share some of our concerns with you in person. This is my fourth year as chairman and I have extended this same invitation to you the past three years. To date no one from the county commissioners has attended one of our monthly meetings or accompanied us on a visit. The Committee works hard at assuring that the residents' rights are respected and hope that the Commissioners share the same concerns and accordingly acknowledge the efforts of this committee.

1. Were all the homes in the county served by the committee? Yes. There are 90 Adult Care and Family Care homes in Buncombe County with a total of 1290 residents that are served by the committee. All homes assigned to the committee were served during the 2008 – 2009 fiscal year. Committee members volunteered 425.75 hours of their time and drove 2713.8 miles serving these homes during the 4 quarters of the year from July 1, 2008- June 30, 2009.

2. Describe the educational efforts by the committee. The Committee receives educational updates during their monthly meetings from both the Buncombe County Lead Ombudsman and the Supervisor of the Adult Home Specialists at the Buncombe Co. Department of Social Services. The updates usually consist of new state legislation, clarification of resident rights, and home administrator and supervisor responsibilities. Other educational efforts consist of attending various workshops and seminars relating to aging issues and adult care. Some examples for 2008 - 2009 were:

- The November 5, 2008 Area Agency on Aging Community Advisory Committee Annual Retreat held at the Governor's Western Residence.
- Kathy Smith from Disability Rights North Carolina spoke to Committee members about her agency during the January 2009 meeting.
- Buncombe DSS Continuing Education programs (CEU) such as "Star Rating Program and Legislative Updates" (4/09/2009) and "Mental Illness, Stress & Commitments" (11/17/2009)

3. Describe community involvement by the committee. Community involvement by the committee extends to the actual visits to the committee's assigned homes. Homes are monitored by the committee for resident living conditions, resident services, and the assistance required by the residents for personal care. On these visits to the facilities, members always attempt to visit personally and privately with residents. Often committee members receive phone calls from residents. Committee members work with the callers, the Ombudsman, and DSS staff to advocate and help resolve residents' concerns.

The Committee also sponsors an annual Activity Grant Award for Family Care Homes. The award is for the Family Care Home that provided a "worthy way" to enhance the residents' quality of life. The

winner of the award for 2009 was Heart and Hearth Family Care Home. They plan to use the \$250 grant to build raised organic gardening beds to support meaningful occupation for each resident, social/group participation and community involvement.

4. Describe problems encountered by the Committee. The committee itself has experienced a good deal of turnover and continues to face the challenge of recruiting new members who have a real commitment to the work the Committee does. A significant and alarming issue involving the facilities is the mixing of younger, mentally ill adults in with frail, older adults. The supervisors and staff of adult care and family care homes do not have appropriate training to handle residents with severe, persistent mental illness, thus endangering everyone in the home, including staff. Training of any kind for supervisors and staff is minimal, and staff turnover can be high due to the demands of caring for the needs of the residents and the facility.

5. Was the Committee involved in grievance resolution during the year? The Committee was involved in limited grievance resolution for individual residents during 2008/2009. Committee members usually refer resident concerns to either the Ombudsman or the DSS Intake Line, which forwards the complaint to an Adult Home Specialist and/or Adult Protective Services. Many systemic issues are raised and discussed at meetings together with a representative from the Department of Social Services. The Buncombe Co. Adult Care Home Committee continues to closely monitor legislative activities and work as advocates for all residents living in adult care homes.

6. Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the facilities in the county.

Strengths: The resident capacity of the facilities in the county is sufficient to handle residents who are unable to live independently. The majority of the facilities provide good living accommodations, resident services and personal care for the residents.

Weaknesses: Minimal staff training and high staff turnover rate. There are an unacceptable number of facilities that are in need of cleaning and repair. There is concern from members of this committee regarding the increasing number of younger, mentally ill residents being placed in facilities initially designed and staffed for an older and/or physically challenged population.

There also is concern for the number of residents being admitted from mental hospitals and adult care homes in South Carolina. This activity places both budget pressure on North Carolina, and potential stress on the transferred residents due to the lack of visitation from family and friends. Younger and mentally disadvantaged individuals have limited activities and places to go when living in the restrictive environment of an adult care home. Also, Medicaid reimbursements in North Carolina continue to be squeezed, and are less than adequate to fully insure the needs and quality of life of the residents.

7. Other Comments: The NC State/County Special Assistance Program (SA) covers the cost of care for low income residents of adult care homes. Medicaid also reimburses each home approximately \$500 per resident per month for personal care. It is important to understand that the SA program consists of 50% state and 50% county dollars. For FY 2009 (July – May) Buncombe County's share was \$1,901,219. Therefore, the total program cost in Buncombe was \$3,802,438. Since half of SA is county funded, the county commissioners need to assure that our Buncombe County dollars are well-spent on adequate living accommodations for individuals who cannot live independently, yet do not need the medical care provided by skilled nursing facilities.

Prepared by: Robert Phillips

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