

## **WFAA Investigative Report**

By Charlotte Huffman, Investigative Reporter for WFAA Channel 8  
Airs Wednesday, November 15 and Thursday, November 16 at 10:00 p.m.

### **The Senior Source**

Official Response

In response to the WFAA investigative unit's segment which aired on November 15 and 16, 2017, we applaud Charlotte Huffman and WFAA's efforts in bringing awareness to the issues impacting older adults residing in long-term care facilities. For 56 years, The Senior Source has been assisting, protecting, and connecting older adults in greater Dallas. Through the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program at The Senior Source, our team of Ombudsmen, make regular, unannounced visits to licensed assisted living and skilled nursing facilities ensuring the needs of each resident are met.

Last year, staff and certified volunteers from The Senior Source made 4,833 visits to nursing homes and licensed assisted living facilities. In these 4,833 visits, the program served 13,557 residents. To provide context, today, there are currently 72 nursing homes and 234 assisted living facilities in Dallas County.

We know there are many long-term care facilities that strive to provide the highest quality care to their residents and work diligently to ensure each resident is treated with dignity and respect. Unfortunately, not all Texas long-term care facilities follow suit. Texas currently ranks 46th in the country for nursing home quality of care and lags in many critical related quality measures. The Senior Source believes that more stringent regulations and comprehensive legislation can better protect older adults throughout Texas.

The document attached outlines the areas in which The Senior Source is advocating for change regarding nursing home reform. The mission of The Senior Source is to ensure all older adults in greater Dallas have the tools and resources needed to thrive. Taking a stand to protect our community's seniors is just one of the many ways our agency ensures that mission is accomplished. To learn more or to join our cause, visit our website at [www.TheSeniorSource.org](http://www.TheSeniorSource.org)



## **Long-Term Care Reform Recommendations** *November 2017*

The Senior Source is committed to advocating for the quality of care for residents in long-term care settings and empowering residents and their families with the knowledge and tools to advocate for themselves. Unfortunately, Texas ranks 46<sup>th</sup> in the country for nursing home quality of care, up from 49<sup>th</sup> the year prior. Our state and our community have much work to do to ensure residents in long-term care facilities are protected and properly cared for at all times. The Senior Source encourages legislators and government officials to consider comprehensive reform for Long-Term Care facilities in Texas.

Critical reform recommendations include:

- Expanding the nursing facility direct care staff enhancement program. Nursing home residents should receive 4.1 hours of direct care from a licensed nurse or certified nurse aide per day. Currently, Texas is below this national average.
- Requiring nursing home staff to receive training that reflects the needs of residents. Staff education is an important strategy to protect residents' rights and prevent abuse and neglect.
- Providing appropriate funding to implement the Patient Safety and Abuse Prevention Act in Texas. The Act creates a national program of criminal background checks on employees of long-term care providers who have access to residents of facilities or people receiving care in their homes. Texas has chosen not to apply for the grant benefit because of the ongoing costs it creates that are not funded by the federal government.
- Requiring annual background checks, at a minimum, for ANYONE working in long-term care facilities.
- Creating a long-term care oversight committee to monitor quality of care, as well as provide recommendations for ongoing reform. This committee is encouraged to tackle critical issues in the care of long-term care residents, such as the over-prescribing of anti-psychotic medications.
- Planning for initiatives that strengthen oversight of long-term care facilities to ensure safety for residents and clients of these entities, especially in emergency situations.
- Funding to organize a statewide Friendly Visitor Program to provide nursing home residents with much needed socialization and activities. Sadly, the majority of nursing home residents never have visitors. Dallas has the only Friendly Visitor Program in the State of Texas.
- Increasing the personal needs allowance from \$60 to \$75. This is the monthly amount of money that the resident gets to keep from their Social Security before the rest goes to the nursing home if the resident is on Medicaid. The Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustment has increased on average 2.39% every year since 2006 while the Texas personal needs allowance has stayed the same.

In their 85<sup>th</sup> State Legislature's interim charges, the Texas House is reviewing the State's readiness to care for aging Texans by reviewing the reimbursement methodologies for nursing homes and assisted living facilities, and the Texas Senate will make recommendations for initiatives to strengthen oversight of long-term care facilities to ensure safety and improve quality for residents and clients of these entities. We applaud Texas' Legislative Branch for taking this issue on and are hopeful that these interim charges will produce strong legislative bills that will improve the quality of care and the safety of our most vulnerable Texans.

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