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# Client's rights

**Current, evidence-based training and education**

The elders you care for want to be treated well... and with respect... just like anyone would.

**Just because they're older, does not mean that you should treat them any differently than anyone.**

After all, they have the same feelings that everyone does:

Your elders want to be loved and appreciated, treated with respect, and have a rewarding, desirable quality of life each day.

## Use compassion

And, anyway, as a frontline caregiver, it just makes common sense that you would want to treat your elders as compassionately as possible, to make sure that they have the best possible life in your facility.

**Remember, that's why you decided to become a caregiver in the first place!**

## Their legal rights

But there's more to it than compassionate caregiving.

**Your elders actually have many "rights" on how the should be treated, which are guaranteed by state and federal laws and guidelines**

These rights include the right to: privacy, dignity, individual choices, and a good quality of life... everyday, all the time.

In fact, these Rights are specifically listed and guaranteed by tough federal and state laws.

**And as a professional caregiver you are required to respect these rights of your elders, or you are in violation of the law.**

**Treat your elders the way you would want to be treated yourself!**

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**Your elders want to be loved, treated with respect, and have a rewarding, desirable quality of life each and every day.**

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**But, even without all these laws, this is the way we should treat all of our fellow human beings.**

And it's easy to figure out how to do it... it's the way we would want to be treated, ourselves.

## The Golden Rule

In fact, there's a name for it: The Golden Rule. Do you remember what that is? It's:

**Treat others the way you would want to be treated yourself.**

If you use the Golden Rule as the central core of your caregiving, with each and every one of your elders, every day, all day long ... you will always be a valued, respected caregiver, who is known for giving the best quality of life to their elders.

## What about those with Alzheimer's?

Those elders in the more advanced stages of Alzheimer's disease often appear as if they don't always know what's going on around them.

So you might wonder if the Golden Rule applies to them, since they may not appear to notice your compassionate caregiving.

According to CMS rules and guidelines, providing high quality, meaningful, care definitely applies to all of your elders, including those in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's.

The CMS clearly states that you must treat those with Alzheimer's disease with what the CMS calls the "reasonable person concept."

**What this means, is that you must treat them... and all of your elders, for that matter... as any "reasonable person" would want to be treated in any given situation.**

That's pretty clear-cut, isn't it?

**It means you'll cover them up when bathing, that you won't treat them like a baby, that you won't allow them to lie for long periods of time in wet sheets, that you give them privacy in their rooms when needed, and so on.**

Basically, giving all of your elders respect and dignity at all times is what this is all about.

"Dignity is a feeling," says Garda Cuthbert, RN a certified nursing home administrator and consultant.

### **Self-respect**

"It is a feeling of self-worth and self-respect. We get this feeling when we feel good about ourselves and what we have done, and when others acknowledge our worth."

**"All your elders need to feel dignity. They need to feel respected and honored for their individuality, for their accomplishments and for their lifetime of living."**

"Each elder needs to be as independent as possible, to be involved in daily life activities and to be able to choose what makes a satisfying and interesting life for them individually."

**Giving all of your elders respect and dignity at all times is what this is all about.**

**Show kindness and respect to all of your elders, all the time.**



"Thinking of your elders as people who are just like you will help you in providing dignity during your care."

"What would you like? What would make you feel embarrassed? What little things would make you feel good about yourself?"

**You must treat all of your Elders... including those With Alzheimer's... as any "reasonable person" would want to be treated in that situation.**

Cuthbert says your elders will feel good about themselves, and feel respected, when they are:

- Allowed to choose their own clothing, activities, grooming and bathing times.
- Called by the name of their choice. Generic names of "Grandma" or "Grandpa" can diminish individuality.

So does "sweetie", "honey" and "baby."

You should not use baby talk with your elders.

- Warned by a knock on their door before someone comes in. That's a matter of respect for their privacy.
- Provided privacy during care when the door is closed, privacy curtains pulled and window shades drawn; and privacy for visiting with friends and family.

**"Thinking of your elders as people who are just like you will help you in providing dignity during your care."**

- Addressed with respect through positive body language and facial expressions.
- Not talked to through "baby talk" which is demeaning and disrespectful.
- Able to enjoy their meals with help as necessary, with the proper clothing protectors and utensils, and meals of their choosing.
- Kept nicely groomed at all times.
- Treated as a very important person... always!

### **CMS requirements**

CMS regulations and guidelines also require that caregivers: give each of their elders a choice of preferred activities and social events, including both individual and group events.

A wide choice of activities and social events is important to each of your elders, and is a federal requirement.

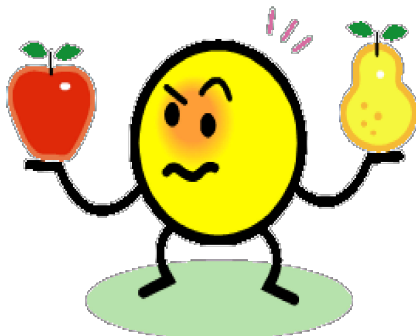
**"All your elders need to feel dignity and to feel respected for their individuality, for their accomplishments and for their lifetime of living."**

According to CMS regulations your elders should be able to choose activities and socializing according to their own interests and backgrounds, including:

- Allowing your elders as much choice as possible in dining, including choice of foods, times of eating, being able to dine with acquaintances if they desire, and so on.
- Allowing them to sleep on their own schedule.
- Making snacks available at all times of the day and night.
- Allow them to choose which clothes to wear, and to be properly groomed.
- Letting them have friends and relatives in to visit whenever they want, as long as it doesn't interfere with other residents' rights.
- Letting them continue to pursue their long-standing hobbies and interests as much as possible. This includes crafts, hobbies, listening to music or playing a music instrument, and so on.
- Allowing them to have their preferred type of bath.

There's more to this list, but you get the idea.

**It's all a part of the CMS "Culture Change Program" which is designed to make nursing homes much more like a home environment for each of your elders.**



**Choices: You should let your elders have as many choices as possible: types of food, snacks, activities, clothing, bedtimes, type of bath.**



**All your elders need to feel dignity; to feel respected and honored for their individuality, their accomplishments and for their lifetime of living.**

### **List of patient rights practiced at the Veterans Administration**

- You will be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect as an individual.
- Your privacy will be protected.
- You will receive care in a safe environment. We will seek to honor your personal and religious values.
- You or someone you choose has the right to keep and spend your money.
- Treatment will respect your personal freedoms.
- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you may wear your own clothes.
- You may keep personal items. This will depend on your medical condition.
- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you have the right to social interaction and regular exercise.
- You will have the opportunity for religious worship and spiritual support.
- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you have the right to communicate freely and privately.
- You may have or refuse visitors.
- You will have access to public telephones.
- You may participate in civic rights, such as voting and free speech.
- As a nursing home resident, you can organize and take part in resident groups in the facility. Your family also can meet with the families of other residents.
- In order to provide a safe treatment environment for all patients or residents and staff, you are expected to respect other patients, residents and staff and to follow the facility's rules.
- You will be given information about the health benefits you can receive. The information will be provided in a way you can understand.
- Your medical record will be kept confidential.
- Information about you will not be released without your consent unless authorized by law.
- You have the right to information in your medical record and may request a copy of your medical records.



**Confidentiality and privacy**

Another important area of your elders’s rights is the right of privacy.

**Because of very tough federal regulations, with very high penalties, you cannot divulge any medical information about any of your elders to anyone except immediate caregivers, without the elder’s permission.**

This is a part of the federal HIPAA regulations, and is an important part of the privacy that your elders are all entitled to.

What this means, is that the days are long gone when you can run around town announcing that prominent local citizen Mrs. X. has been admitted to your facility with Alzheimer’s disease.

HIPAA law says that you cannot give out this information, unless the elder has specifically given you permission to do so.

The penalties for violating the HIPAA law are severe, and were even strengthened with new rules in 2013 and 2014.

**It’s important that you check with your supervisors about what you can say about your elders, and to whom, as this is a very important part of your caregiving knowledge.**

**You cannot divulge medical information to anyone except immediate caregivers, without the elder’s permission.**

**Show interest in them**

And here’s a tip that can make you one of the most respected... and effective... caregivers in your entire facility: brighten their day, and show them that you’re interested in them all the time.

**How you do this? It’s easy:**

- Give them a bright and cheery smile, always.
- Undertake friendly conversation at every possible opportunity.
- Ask them about themselves, how they’re doing, how they’re feeling, and so on.
- Take lots of time to talk to them about many things of interest: accomplishments in their past life, their children and grandchildren, their hobbies, their travels... that sort of thing.

**As a front line caregiver, you are one of the most important persons in each of your elder’s daily lives**

**These are very important caregiving skills, as they can go a long ways in keeping your elders happy and with a feeling of a good quality of life in your facility.**

All of these words and information can be boiled down to the Golden Rule: Treat each of your elders as you’d like to be treated, in all circumstances.

**Always... show that you are interested in them, and respect them for their long life, well lived.**



**Remember the “Golden Rule”: Treat your elders like you’d like to be treated!**

Always keep in mind that, as a front line caregiver, you are one of the most important persons in each of your elder’s daily lives, and they are depending upon you to make their quality of life as happy, enjoyable, and productive as possible.

That’s one of your most important jobs as a front line caregiver... one of the most important people in their lives. END



**“Always keep in mind that, as a front line caregiver, you are one of the most important persons in each of your elder’s daily lives, and they are depending upon you to make their quality of life as happy, enjoyable, and productive as possible.”**

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Questions for thought and discussion

**Elder's Rights**

1. Did you have a good understanding of your elder's rights before you read this article? Why or why not?
2. What areas are you still confused or uncertain about?
3. Do you think you do a good job of respecting all your elders' rights? Why or why not?
4. Do you try to give them choices of most things, most of the time?
5. What is your biggest problem area relative to your elders' rights?

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## Inservice quiz: Resident Rights and Dignity

### Learning objectives:

1. To understand the laws and guidelines about your elders' rights.
2. To understand why frontline caregivers are an important factor in maintaining elders' rights, dignity, and quality of life.
3. To learn some of the things caregivers specifically can do to maintain a dignified, respected, life for their elders.
  1. **True, False.** Caregiving by the "Golden Rule" means that you are a compassionate caregiver who treats all of your elders like you would like to be treated.
  2. **True, False.** Your elders each have a long list of rights, that state and federal law requires caregivers to abide by.
  3. **True, False.** Because they do not understand what's going on around them, your elders with advanced Alzheimer's disease do not have these rights guaranteed by law.
  4. **True, False.** Talking to your elders using "baby talk" can work quite well in getting them to understand you, and you should do this frequently.
  5. **What are some of the things you should do to give your elders dignity and respect?** (Check all that apply.)
    - a. Make sure they are covered, and have privacy, when bathing.
    - b. Let them choose their own clothing to wear.
    - c. Let them choose their meals.
    - d. Let them choose the type of bath that they prefer.
  6. **True, False.** It is a federal requirement that each of your elders has a wide choice of activities and social events to choose from... according to their own interests and desires... each day.
  7. **True, False.** The "reasonable person" concept is a federal rule that requires caregivers to treat their elders like a reasonable person would want to be treated in that circumstance.
  8. **True, False.** The "reasonable person" concept does not apply to those elders in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's disease, because they do not relate to what is going on around them.
  9. **True, False.** Federal and state regulations state that you cannot tell anyone, except immediate caregivers, anything about your elders' medical condition without their permission.
  10. **True, False.** Compassionate caregiving, that respects your elders rights and dignity at all times, is considered to be one of the most important of all caregiving skills.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_

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Quiz answers

- |            |      |
|------------|------|
| 1. T       | 6.T  |
| 2. T       | 7. T |
| 3. F       | 8. F |
| 4. F       | 9. T |
| 5. a,b,c,d | 10.T |