

Quotable Quotes from Front-line Staff

At the February 2006 launch of this website, Citizen Watch called for confidential feedback on the experiences of residents in continuing care facilities in Alberta for the purpose of review and analysis. By mid July 2006, we had received reports from 22 families and 4 front-line staff.

The following pages feature comments by those staff members. Their insider knowledge, observations and candid views provide important insights into the working conditions, policies, practices and standards of the facilities where they give care. Individually and collectively, these submissions reflect a determination to speak out with the hope of bettering the lives of both care recipients and care providers. Citizen Watch wants to thank these 4 individuals for their contributions to this website and their commitment to those they serve. The following quotes are excerpts from their submissions.

1. Working Conditions

“Because of shortage of staff, we are rushed to meet deadlines. A typical day (7am – 3pm) includes: report time; personal care for 12 residents including two baths; toileting; bowel care; helping with serving breakfast and lunch; helping to feed residents, removing them from the tables and cleaning them up if needed; putting some residents down for naps after breakfast and lunch; taking blood pressure; weighing residents; charting; collecting samples; helping with dressing if needed; tidying the residents environment; addressing the needs of the families. Somewhere in this day, we try to find time to spend 1 to 1 with our residents. Believe me, it does not happen often.”

“The resident (to staff) ratio in the facility where I work is 16-1. This is not official, but that is usually the working situation.”

“We have less than two hours to get twelve people to breakfast. Often, there are 4 or 5 to completely feed out of the 12 and there are only two of us to do this and sometimes just one of us.”

“In this facility, working conditions are poor, staff turnover is problematic and abnormally high.”

2. Impact of Working Conditions

“As workers on the front-line, we have seen such poor quality care.”

“Our residents could be higher functioning for a longer period of time if we had the staff to keep them motivated and encouraged to do more for themselves instead of us doing for them because it is faster.”

“We are spoon feeding more than one at a time. I find this very undignified.”

“We take away so much from our residents because of lack of time due to lack of staff.”

3. Facility Policy

“The facility allows four diapers per day per client. Staff are often chastised if more diapers are used. The supervisor tells staff that diapers are expensive and they should not change the diapers as often.”

“Where I work, RNs do no patient care whatsoever. Nor do they help us with feeding of the residents.”

“They are hiring unskilled people or people not suited to the job. The demand for staff leaves them hiring whomever should come through the door.”

“The facility allows unsafe nursing practices ...things such as pre-signing medications and pre-pouring as many as 40 medications at a single given time before administering. Due to the workload and time constraints, these medications must all be pre-poured.”

4. Facility Management

“After hearing complaints of misconduct from employees, or hearing cases of neglect and abuse, the manager does nothing to resolve or ensure these issues are taken care of. Although management is aware of such conditions, they pretend they’ve never heard anything which keeps them from being held accountable.”

“Our management has done very little to monitor or enforce the provision of good quality care.”

5. Facility Inspections

“When members of the Health Facilities Review Committee come into the facilities, everything looks fine. Truth be known, management is notified in advance of the review date and has time to bring the facility up to the perceived status quo. After the review, it is back to substandard business as usual. These facilities need unscheduled inspections to see what the front-line workers see every day”

6. Personal Perspectives and Sentiments

“Lots of people feel the same way we do, including family members of residents. They are all afraid to say anything and many feel these conditions will not improve anyway.”

“My observation is that clients’ comfort is being sacrificed to make a profit for the facility.”

“Funding that is provided for the proper and acceptable care of residents seems to be more directed toward fattening the bottom line for the owner/share holders.”

“Everything from the Accreditation Process, Nursing Home Operation Regulations, to the (Health) Authorities, are all mechanisms that say, “We do this – we have this – and we’re all that.” In the end, they all have no impact on the quality of care given to the people who must live in these facilities. There is nothing being done to monitor or enforce better quality of care.”

“We can’t stand to see the residents suffer. We did not join nursing to work under such unacceptable conditions. We also feel helpless that, so far, we haven’t been able to do anything to help improve the situation, except to bring it to everyone’s attention.”

“My heart goes out to these residents who gave us this great country. We could give them a much better quality of life if only we had more say in what they need and how this could be achieved.”