

Aging Committee Seeks Specifics From Workgroup

Lawmakers Want A More Clear-Cut Definition Of Assisted Living

In a recent letter to the Assisted Living Workgroup (ALW), the Senate Special Committee on Aging called for the establishment of a minimum level of services that a provider must offer in order to use the term “assisted living” in its title.

According to the letter, the committee is concerned that ALW’s current working definition of assisted living is too vague.

“The current definition as drafted may not be specific or detailed enough [to] provide consumers a clear understanding of what kinds of services they should expect in assisted living,” the letter said. “The committee expects the definition the workgroup ultimately chooses to have sufficient detail to ensure that those facilities that are not providing a minimum level of service do not receive the classification ‘assisted living.’”

The letter is a confirmation of a July meeting that the Aging Committee held with ALW. The ALW participants were seeking further clarification from the committee about enforcement, consumer education, and other areas.

ALW has been struggling with developing recommendations regarding contract disclosure, resident assessment, discharge notices, enforcement, and increased access of information to consumers, according to the letter.

ALW was formed in August 2001



after the Senate committee urged assisted living stakeholders to work together to develop recommendations that would ensure quality in assisted living. Since then, ALW has been working on developing policies and best practices to be included in a report to the Senate committee next April.

Concerned about subquality assisted

living care, the Aging Committee wants consumers to make well-informed decisions when they decide to sign an assisted living contract.

“The committee expects that the Workgroup’s April report will help to address two difficult questions: 1.) what is quality assisted living, and 2.) what is the best way to increase the number of informed assisted living consumers?”

The committee is also looking for recommendations on enforcement policies, and ALW recently formed a new subcommittee to address this area. The Senate committee’s letter also added, “At the current time, consensus among committee members is that the workgroup’s recommendations will primarily be best utilized as a resource for state policymakers and facility operators. But the need for a more significant federal role may increase as Medicaid becomes a larger piece of the payer formulation.”

A copy of the letter is posted on the National Center for Assisted Living Web site at www.ncal.org.

—Lisa Gelhaus