

# Nursing Home Residents' Rights

## Right to Privacy – Visitors, Phone Calls, Mail

When you live in a nursing home, you have the right to expect privacy when you visit, have telephone conversations, or exchange mail with family, friends, government representatives, Ombudsmen, or anyone else.

### Visitors

If married, you have the right to be assured privacy for visits by your spouse. If both you and your spouse are residents in the nursing home, you have the right to share a room.



The right to privacy when visiting does not require the nursing home to provide private rooms for everyone. Because not everyone has a private room, it is necessary to be flexible so roommates may have a quiet place to rest, sleep, or receive treatment. The staff in your home will help you find a private place for visiting.

The nursing home may not put unreasonable limitations on visiting hours, and may not limit visits from certain individuals. All court orders regarding visitor limitations will be honored. The nursing home should work with all residents to accommodate their needs while protecting the privacy of others who live there.

### Phone Calls

As a resident in a nursing home, you have the right to have access to a telephone. Telephones for residents to use should be:

- T Located in an area where your conversation will not be overheard.
- T Easy to reach for those residents in wheelchairs.
- T Adapted for use by the hearing impaired.

This right does not mean that your nursing home must provide you with a private phone or that it must pay for your long distance phone calls.

### Mail

You also have the right to send mail and receive mail that is unopened.

Right to Privacy—Visitors, Phone Calls, Mail *(continued)*

You should receive your mail unopened and on the days there is mail delivery to your nursing home.

The nursing home must have stamps and letter writing materials available. However, it is not required to provide these materials free to residents.

If finding a place to meet privately with your visitors is a problem, or if the time

your visitors are allowed to visit seems too short, you may discuss this right with the nursing home staff or contact the Department of Public Health, Licensing and Certification, District Office, or the Ombudsman Program in your county. The telephone numbers of both agencies are posted in your facility.

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