

# Assisted Living Staff Checklist for Responding to Resident/Family Member or Guardian\* Complaints

*For use with NCAL's in-service training tool, "Turning Complaints Into Compliments."*

**Step 1: Create a culture within the assisted living community that encourages residents/family member or guardians to express concerns freely with staff.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Solicit feedback, complaints, and suggestions for improvement on a regular basis through multiple mechanisms: staff can ask residents/family member/guardian's in-person, via e-mail, survey letters, newsletters, complaint boxes, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ If invited, send a representative to resident or family council meetings.

**Step 2: Show empathy for the situation and take notes during an initial contact with the resident/family or guardians.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Apologize for the inconvenience and begin writing down information during initial conversation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Explain how the community will handle the resident/family member/guardian's concern.

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide a time frame for the response and/or who will be following up.

**Step 3: Use a standard form to document the problem and the solution.**

\_\_\_\_\_ A standard form should be readily available at central locations within the community, such as the reception desk, dining room, floor lounge or near entrances of different wings, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ File the completed form in the administrator or executive director's in-box, mail box, log book, or other designated location.

**Step 4: Refer concerns that cannot be resolved immediately to a predetermined staff member.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Let the resident/family member/guardian know that a designated staff person will work with them to develop a solution. Provide that staff person's phone number, e-mail address, and hours available.

---

\* Guardian, in this document, refers to legal guardian, power of attorney or deputy power of attorney.

\_\_\_\_\_ Reassure the resident/family member/guardian making the complaint that the designated staff person will respond within **[insert a time range determined by the community]**.

\_\_\_\_\_ In complex/serious cases, the designated staff person should send a letter to the resident/family member/guardian acknowledging the community's receipt of complaint. The letter should summarize the concern and explain how long it will take to resolve issue. The letter should also include the staff person's contact information and available hours.

#### **Step 5: Gather the facts.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Conduct conversations with all staff members involved in the complaint and determine the appropriate solution.

\_\_\_\_\_ Complex or serious issues require a more investigatory approach and notifying appropriate authorities.

#### **Step 6: Formulate a solution.**

\_\_\_\_\_ For simple grievances, a staff member may propose a resolution during the initial conversation. Also ensure that the resident/family member/guardian agrees with the solution.

\_\_\_\_\_ For complex issues that can't be immediately resolved, ask the resident/family member/guardian for suggestions or desired results. The staff member should then explain that the administrator or executive director will be informed of the issue and that either he or she or another designated staff member will contact the resident/family member or guardian.

#### **Step 7: Follow up.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Inform the resident/family member or guardian about the resolution and ask him or her if this is satisfactory.

\_\_\_\_\_ After some time has passed, the staff member should ask again if this resolution is working for the resident/family member or guardian.