

# Getting Informed and Getting Heard



## Long Term Care: Sources of Information and Support for Residents and Families

For many Ontarians, choosing an appropriate long-term care home for their loved one can be a trying and emotional experience.

Ruthie Cohen, who recently placed her husband George in a long-term care home, says she was fraught with anxiety about the decision to move George into long-term care.

“I couldn’t help but feel as though I was abandoning him,” Ruthie says. “I was relieved to discover there was an extensive protection and support system in place.”

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Ruthie’s feelings are not uncommon. Be it your father, mother or spouse, feelings of guilt and concerns about their safety and well-being can often be overwhelming.

However, by taking the time to select the appropriate accommodations and understanding your rights as a resident and a consumer, the transition to long-term care can be a pleasant one.

Here’s an overview of the consumer and resident information and protection measures afforded in Ontario’s long-term care homes.

### All Homes are Government Regulated and Inspected.

The provincial government legislates and regulates how all long-term care homes in Ontario operate. The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care conducts unannounced annual inspections to ensure all homes follow the rules. In addition, the Ministry will do more frequent inspections if they have concerns and/or in response to a complaint.

The Ministry issues an ‘unmet standard’ to a home where it finds that a standard has not been met. Homes are required to develop a Ministry-approved plan to correct any unmet standards. If the Ministry feels the violations are serious enough, it can impose sanctions on the home, such as closing the home to new admissions, until the Ministry is satisfied that the violations are addressed.

You have the right to see the home’s Inspection reports. “This”, says Ruthie, “was very helpful in selecting the right home for George.”

### Where to Get Ministry Inspection Reports on LTC Homes

- Posted in the home
- Results posted on the Reports on Long Term Care Homes website at [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)

### The Residents Bill of Rights

All long term care homes are required to post and comply with the Residents Bill of Rights. When the new Long Term Care Homes Act is proclaimed, this Bill will be fully enshrined in legislation. To obtain a copy of the Bill visit [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)

### Making Complaints

While it was comforting to know the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care was working to ensure long-term care homes are compliant with laws and regulations, Ruthie says she felt better knowing there were avenues she and George could take to register complaints if they felt George’s safety or care was being compromised.

With respect to complaints policies and procedures in the home, every resident has the right to exercise their rights as a citizen and raise concerns or recommend changes to policies and services on behalf of themselves or others. Every resident has the right to be informed in writing of any law, rule or policy affecting the operation of the home and of the procedures for initiating complaints.

Residents and families have the right to make complaints without fear of restraint, interference, coercion, discrimination or reprisal.

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## How to raise a concern or Make Complaint

### 1. Directly to the Home

There are two ways to do this. The first is to raise the concern directly with the home's management or through a staff member. The second is as per the process outlined in the home's formal complaint process. You are entitled to request and receive a copy of this process.

### 2. Raise it with the Residents' Council

Every home has a Residents' Council which meets regularly. The Resident's

Council provides a strong line of communication between the home and residents and, in this context, provides a formal structure for raising concerns.

### 3. Raise it with the Family Council

More and more homes now have formal Family Councils which are comprised of family members of residents. They provide a supportive environment for families and a forum to discuss common issues and concerns.

### 4. Call the Ministry's Long Term Care Action Line 1-866-434-0144

The service operates 8:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. seven days a week. Calls are anonymous and go directly to the Ministry. All calls are investigated, immediately if they suggest a risk of harm to a resident.

## Understanding Reports on the Long-Term Care Homes Website

The Reports on Long-Term Care Homes website provides basic information (location, operator size etc.) about Ontario's over 600 plus long-term care homes in Ontario. It also contains the results of the home's last annual inspection report as well as a record of any verified complaints. It will also indicate whether or not sanctions are currently being applied against the home.

Residents and families should be aware of the following when visiting the web site. The site:

- + contains data on a home that could be several months old
- + does not indicate if any identified issues

- have already been fixed
- + only specifically identifies which of the over 400 standards and criteria that a home did not meet, not how many the home did meet
- + does not differentiate between serious or not-so-serious infractions

## Source Check List

- Home Administrator
- Annual Inspection Report
- Home's response to Annual Inspection Report
- Reports on Long Term Care Homes web site
- Residents Bill of Rights
- Home's complaint procedure
- Residents' Council contact
- Family Council contact

"At the end of the day, there is no substitute for visiting a home, talking to management and seeing the home for yourself," says Ruthie. "When you do this armed with access to the information on the home's performance, knowledge of your rights and how to utilize them, then you can be both informed and comfortable."

*All applications for long-term care must be made through a Community Care Access Centre (CCAC). To find your CCAC go to: [www.ccac-ont.ca](http://www.ccac-ont.ca)*

*For other information on long term care in Ontario visit:*

[www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)  
[www.oltca.com](http://www.oltca.com)