



Dear Editor,

Louisiana Nursing Home Association (LNHA) recently learned of a report by the Legislative Auditor's Office. Our association is proud of the high level of care provided by our member facilities to approximately 26,000 of Louisiana's frail and elderly residents. LNHA believes several recent press articles have failed to shed light on improvements listed in the report as well as the complexities that must be analyzed in providing a quality service in an efficient, affordable manner.

Louisiana nursing facilities have succeeded in achieving a number of quality initiatives. One example is evidenced by the substantial number of nursing facilities that improved their overall Five Star Quality Rating between 2009 and 2014. The overall rating created by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) is based on scores in three domains: health inspections, staffing and quality measures. The proportion of facilities with a one-star overall rating in Louisiana has decreased by 57% and the proportion with a five-star overall rating increased by 438% from January 2009 to May 2014, and the percentage of facilities with a four-star rating increased by 70% during the same time period.

Another example is that LNHA, working in concert with the Department of Health and Hospitals, succeeded in reducing the number of overall beds and the number of empty beds. Over the past 10 years, Louisiana's nursing facilities accomplished an intentional reduction of licensed beds by 10%. This reduction translates to 34 nursing facilities being closed. Additionally, occupancy has increased from 70% to 75%. Contrary to popular belief, nursing facilities are not paid for excess capacity; in fact, they are penalized if occupancies are less than 85%.

The federal government measures quality in nursing facilities. This data clearly shows great improvement by Louisiana nursing facilities as follows:

- RN staffing increased 75% in Louisiana nursing facilities as compared to 44% nationally
- Total nurse staffing increased 19% in Louisiana as compared to 13% nationally
- The use of physical restraints and the development of pressure ulcers decreased faster in Louisiana than the nation
- Neuroleptic medication use decreased 11%

According to the *2013 American's Health Rankings Annual Edition*, Louisiana's seniors rank second worst in the nation in health measures such as diabetes, obesity, physical inactivity and smoking. These complicating factors help determine the condition of residents in nursing facilities. Louisiana nursing facilities admit residents that are "older and sicker" than in the past; therefore, this contributes to the health outcomes that are experienced in the facilities.

LNHA and our members will continue to strive to achieve these initiatives. LNHA is proud of the high quality, dedicated care its member facilities offer their residents. For more information on LNHA, visit our website at www.lnha.org.

Sincerely,

Joseph Donchess
Executive Director