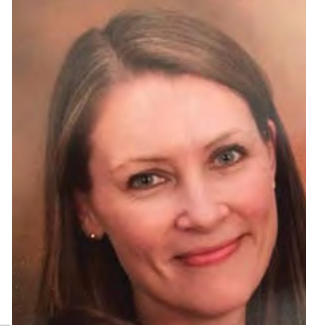


WALA ADVOCATE



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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Pam Preston, WALA Board President

As I write this, the vaccination process for our residents and staff is well underway, and we are seeing reduced rates of new cases of COVID-19 in Wisconsin. Spring is approaching, along with its warmer days and the sounds of the first birds chirping. I hope that you are enjoying the same sense of hopefulness that I am after the challenges of the last year. As author Hal Borland said, "No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn."

Throughout the pandemic, the WALA staff has been working tirelessly to advocate on your behalf and to ensure you have all the tools and resources to navigate COVID-19. Our upcoming spring conference (April 13–15) offers a robust agenda in a virtual format so that you can participate without needing to leave your community. Engaging and upbeat keynote speaker Dennis McIntee will show you how to create your dream team. Some highlights include several sessions focused on COVID-19, a facilitated discussion with DHS leaders, and opportunities to connect with peers. With all that you have to juggle and manage, the spring conference offers invaluable tools, information, and support. We hope to see you there.

As I mentioned above, WALA continues to advocate on your behalf, working closely with the Department of Health Services, the Bureau of Assisted Living, the Division of Medicaid Services, the state legislature, and the governor's office. We know that you face important issues related to caregiver funding and the Family Care program. We are actively working with the governor's office and the legislature on a continuation of the Direct Care Workforce Funding Initiative and to find ways to fix Family Care.

WALA members participated in the advocacy process at our 2021 virtual Legislative Days (March 17–18). This was a wonderful way to meet elected officials and to discuss the most salient matters impacting assisted living. We hope you were able to join us at this event, and we urge you to reach out to WALA to let us know how we can support you. We are here for you, and we thank you for all the wonderful care and service you provide to your residents.

WALA'S MISSION STATEMENT



Wisconsin Assisted Living Association's mission is to support providers in enhancing the best quality of life for residents in assisted living in Wisconsin through advocacy, education, communication, and quality initiatives.

Effective 2020, the WALA Watch is now the WALA Advocate. The WALA Advocate is the newsletter of the Wisconsin Assisted Living Association. Published in March, June, September, and December by the Wisconsin Assisted Living Association. Reprint permission available from WALA. All rights reserved. Promotional information and rates are available by contacting WALA. We reserve the right to decline promotions submitted for publication.

WISCONSIN ASSISTED LIVING ASSOCIATION

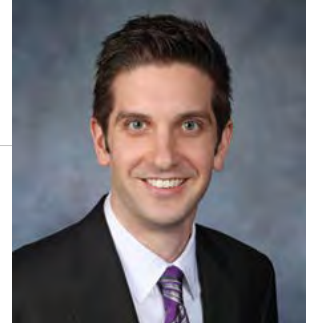
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CEO CORNER

By Mike Pochowski, WALA CEO



I know I have said this over the past few newsletters, but I wanted to once again thank you for all of your hard work and dedication over the past year. You are working on the front lines during an international pandemic that we have never endured, and all of you are doing an amazing job continuing to care for your residents and supporting your employees. We are truly thankful for everything you are doing and continue to do. You are the true heroes.

Over these past several months, it has been our pleasure to advocate on your behalf, and we are happy to report a number of successes. These include:

- Passage of 2021 Wisconsin Act 4, which provides reasonable liability protections for COVID-19–related injury/death (excludes reckless/wanton conduct or intentional misconduct)
- Passage of Assembly Bill 2, which aligns the state income tax code with federal changes that exclude Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loans from taxable income
- COVID-19 vaccine roll-out to residents and employees at assisted living facilities
- Continuous meetings with leadership at the Department of Health Services (DHS), the Division of Medicaid Services (DMS), the Division of Public Health (DPH), and the Bureau of Assisted Living (BAL)

In addition, I would like to thank all the attendees who participated in our Legislative Day event that took place on March 17 and 18. You did a great job advocating for the continuation of the Direct Care Workforce Funding Initiative and modernizing the Family Care program through the 2021–23 state budget. Attendees met with more than 50 representatives and senators advocating for these issues.

I also need to stress the importance of our WALA PAC. It enables us to support elected officials, both Democrats and Republicans, who understand assisted living and who are in a position to support policies that enhance the lives of assisted living residents (such as all the policies listed above). No contribution is too small, and every dollar helps ensure that critical priorities are addressed. Every single contribution to the WALA PAC is greatly appreciated, and you can provide a personal contribution (corporate contributions are not allowed) on our website at ewala.org/page/advocacy.

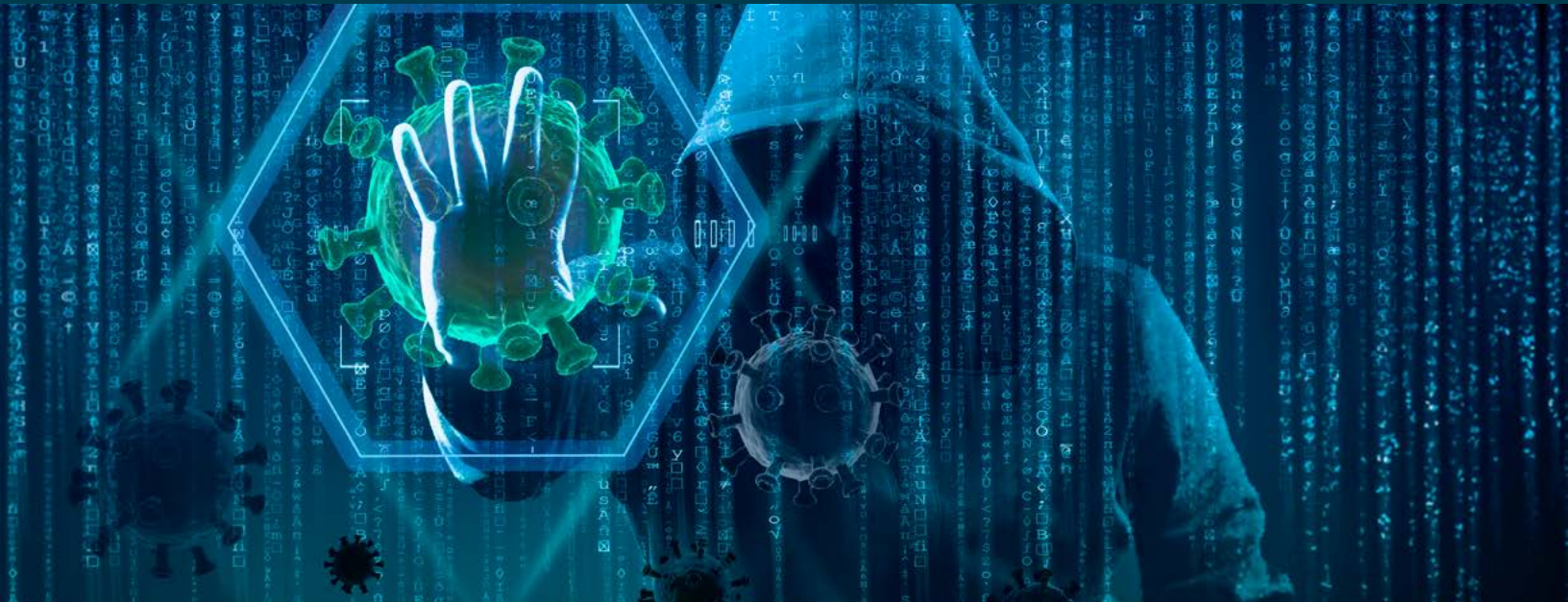
Finally, I hope to see all of you at our upcoming Spring Conference, which will be held April 13–15, 2021. We are offering 32 breakout sessions that include CEUs and NAB credits, along with a number of networking opportunities. All sessions will be recorded, which will allow registered attendees the opportunity to view the sessions after the conference. In addition, we are very excited that DHS Interim Secretary Karen Timberlake will be speaking at the conference, along with Curtis Cunningham (Assistant Administrator for Long Term Care Benefits and Programs; Division of Medicaid Services), Otis Woods (Administrator; Division of Quality Assurance), and Alfred Johnson (Director; Bureau of Assisted Living). The agenda and registration information [can be found here](#).

Thank you for your continued support and membership in WALA. We greatly appreciate it.

WALA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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CYBER CRIME DEVASTATING HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS

By Jason Navarro, Director of Cyber Crime Insurance, [R&R Insurance](#)

In healthcare, you spend countless hours focusing on safety and making sure your organization is safe and welcoming to those you help. Your organization has spent years working to build brand reputation and build relationships with residents, family members, employees, customers, and vendors. Then along comes a cybercriminal targeting your employees. One inadvertent click or electronic response can erase all the hard work to build your business. As a result, the organization can be financially devastated and patient safety can be impacted.

In the last 12 months, the world has changed beyond all of our wildest imaginations, and we have had to adapt to survive. During this same timeframe, a highly organized group of cybercriminals used world events as a cover to unleash some of the most devastating attacks ever seen from a cybercrime standpoint. As a result of cyberattacks, we have seen assisted living facilities required to transfer residents for whom they were not able to access medical records or important patient data that they relied upon. Ultimately, we have seen facilities forced to close down.

It is critical for any healthcare organization to implement a cyber-continuity plan before the loss occurs. Companies that have built a plan, have practiced that plan, and constantly test and adjust that plan will be the ones that have lowered their risk profile to cybercrime. In addition, they will come out better after a loss than those who have not.

Think about what your organization would do right now if you

received a phone call stating that your systems have been locked down. Are you experiencing a ransom situation? Who do you call? Who will help you? What will happen to the residents? How will you get out of a situation for which you have not adequately planned and practiced?

The R&R Cyber Crime Division helps our customers implement a pre-loss mitigation strategy by being an extension of their risk management team and helping our customers be prepared in four key areas.

We help our customers with real claim statistics, predictive analytics, computer algorithms, and mock attack scenarios to build out these four key areas and game plan with our customers. Having played an active role in your cyber defense plan, you will be better prepared so that when the above situation does happen to your organization, you will already have a plan in place.

At the end of the day, insurance is just one part of the program. In fact, it is the last part! If you need to use the insurance, it means you have had a claim. What your organization does before that happens will determine how your experience goes.



MANAGEMENT BY ASKING (MBA)

By Dennis McIntee, [The Leadership Development Group](#)

When I work with leaders, I always ask them if they use their MBA every day when they go to work.

A good bit of the time, I'll get a confused look in return. "That question doesn't apply to me, Dennis. I don't have an MBA." You might be thinking the same thing, but stick with me. When I ask this question, I'm referring to a different MBA. I'm referring to Management by Asking — your MBA.

The main principle to remember to make sure you're fully utilizing your MBA is this:

In any organization, questions should go down and answers should come up — not the other way around. If you consistently tell your team what to do, the responsibility never flows down and will always fall back on you.

Here's how it plays out: You tell your team to do something and they go do it. But then when things crash and burn or they don't achieve a great outcome, they come back to you and say, "Well, I did what you said, and it didn't work. Now what are we going to do?" They feel no level of accountability or ownership. They have no desire to think for themselves, and they expect you to fix the problem.

That's your sign that it's time to use your MBA. Instead of allowing all the responsibility to be shifted back to you, start asking questions to help your team take ownership and think for themselves. Ask questions like this: "In light of those results, what do you think we should do now?" or "How do you think we can solve that problem and keep moving forward?"

As a leader, the questions you ask are some of the most important tools that you have at your disposal. That's why Management by Asking is so important. When you and I use our MBAs, we inspire our team members to start thinking for themselves. We invite them to be part of finding solutions so they feel ownership of what they are doing and accountability for the results they produce. Asking great questions allows delegation to actually happen, and it shows the people on our teams that we actually believe in their ideas and their ability to create great outcomes. As a result, our teams will be more productive, and nothing fuels people to keep doing great work than seeing progress. Everybody wins. Stop telling and start asking today and see just how far your MBA can take you!

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SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW

DATA ANALYTICS MADE EASIER WITH LEVELOGICS

By Cale Guin, [Levelogics](#)

I have lived in Wisconsin my entire life. Over the last four years, I have worked with an assisted living software company consulting at an executive level on marketing and operational matters. It was one of my favorite experiences and instilled in me a love for the industry, but I wanted to provide services differently.

Today's marketing industry is filled with over-hyped and over-sold services and void of realistic strategies that improve business for companies like yours. Last spring, I started Levelogics to give back and use my quarter-century experience working on marketing projects with large budgets and some of the world's largest brands to advise small and mid-sized businesses. My goal is to help you level the playing field when faced with less time, less marketing experience, and less budget than your larger competitors.

Because of its substantial and positive impact on companies, one of my favorite marketing topics is data analytics, which is a fancy way of saying – collecting, understanding, and making decisions on information that is all around you. Data analytics may sound daunting, but I love to help make it easy and as automated as possible with real-time charts and graphs that are easy to look at and understand.

Speaking of data analytics, recently, I commissioned The Harris Poll to study how consumers perceive assisted living communities and how they find and choose assisted living communities for themselves or their loved ones. Given my experience working with an assisted living software company, I knew what to expect.

For example, I knew from community feedback that it's difficult for consumers to afford assisted living. I also knew from working on an assisted living marketing/lead tracking project that communities said they were having great success using social media to attract new prospects and residents. It was also clear that COVID-19 played a huge role in declining census.

It turns out the feedback I heard was "off" on each of those points. The study results were eye-opening, but they reminded me that's what I love about data. It can verify our

hunches and also prevent us from missing crucial learning. This information is vital as it can guide your approach to winning new business and determine where it is safe to invest resources.

The survey was conducted online last fall, as the second COVID wave was in full swing, among over two thousand U.S. adults ages 18+, and their perspective on these and other key areas of focus showed that:

- Price (42%) was the third-highest among the top 3 most important factors for consumers when choosing an assisted living community for themselves or a loved one.
- Few consumers (29%) would turn to a community's social media to find or research assisted living communities for themselves or a loved one.
- Safety protocols (42%) was as important as price (42%), or tied for third among the top 3 most important factors for consumers when choosing an assisted living community for themselves or a loved one.

If you want more info on this study, see the Levelogics ad in this issue that includes details on an upcoming webinar. This study is just the start of the information I want to provide to the assisted living industry.

If you want to say hi or get to know me a little better, you can reach out to me or read, hear or see more about me with the info below. I look forward to getting to know you.

[LinkedIn](#)

cale@levelogics.com

[Levelogics.com](#)

[Totally Hyped Podcast](#)

If you really want to get to know me, [check out this 15 minute podcast](#) episode on a medical diagnosis that led to me being in a wheelchair and to my profound respect for data analytics.

Survey Method: This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Levelogics from September 29-October 1, 2020 among 2,064 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact cale@levelogics.com.

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See the article "Someone You Should Know" in this issue



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DIAMOND ACCREDITATION STATUS AWARDED TO MILTON SENIOR LIVING

Congratulations to Milton Senior Living, a Great Lakes Senior Living community, on achieving Diamond Accreditation in December of 2020. While the past year has been beyond challenging, the team at Milton Senior Living has successfully navigated the accreditation process on top of the rigors of managing a global pandemic. We sat down with MSL Executive Director, Jacqueline Davila, to learn more.

WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT MILTON SENIOR LIVING?

Milton's more rural location provides us with an environment that is easily seen as residential. Individuals looking to move into our community are often acquainted with staff, volunteers, families of residents, or residents themselves. This has helped immeasurably in referral marketing, staff retention, and volunteer involvement with activity programming. We feel fortunate to be such a large part of the community here and participate in local community events and organizations like Milton Chamber of Commerce. Milton is the first community developed by Great Lakes Senior Living, which came to meet the needs of those who had lived their entire lives in Milton and did not wish to leave their hometown. We brought assisted living here!

WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU WOULD RECOMMEND FOR SOMEONE WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN QUALITY IMPROVEMENT BUT DOESN'T KNOW WHERE TO START?

If an opportunity presents in which a new manager is brought on with experience in long-term care, customer service, the hotel industry, food service, etc., ask that person to complete a SWAT analysis for your community using whatever their understanding of what assisted living services should be. Ask that it be completed one month from the date of hire, then ask that this be presented first to the Executive Director and finally to other team managers. So often we believe that the way we complete something is the standard, and we have done it that way so long that we often don't question whether it is really best practice. Fresh eyes bring ideas. Sometimes new opinions validate all that we are doing, and sometimes this helps facilitate change. In the absence of a manager change, complete this yourself or have a current team member do so. Bring a fresh perspective by visiting sister communities or even your competitors. How they approach your challenges can bring fresh ideas. The second most important action is to get a team together to work on the findings with you.



HOW DOES THE CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS HELP ACHIEVE YOUR COMMUNITY'S OVERALL GOALS?

Quality improvement helps you evaluate where you can see success and where challenges still exist. It's one thing to say "We have improved our employee retention." It's an entirely different thing to look at approaches and then be able to quantify your success based on data. That data becomes an important part of how you validate quality and continued efforts toward improvement. Personally, and professionally, it gives me another challenge to keep my position challenging and fresh.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF WITH RESPECT TO YOUR ACCREDITATION ACCOMPLISHMENT?

I am most proud of my team and their response to accreditation. Often when an Executive Director says "We need an analysis of procedures," staff members can quickly identify problems. True team development has occurred not when the problems are identified but when you ask for insight and input to develop approaches that offer buy-in and remedy the issue. Staff members that were here long-term were so proud to have this team accomplish this goal during all that 2020 brought.

Is your community interested in learning more about continuous quality improvement or Diamond Accreditation? Please visit our Diamond page or email for more information.



ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS FOR ASSISTED LIVING ORGANIZATIONS

Assisted living and social service providers should be aware that states across the country are passing reviver statutes, which allow otherwise time-barred claims of sexual abuse to proceed. The statutes vary by jurisdiction but generally do one of three things:

1. Eliminate the statute of limitations for such claims.
2. Extend the statute of limitations for such claims.
3. Create a window (e.g., a period of a few years) in which otherwise time-barred claims can be filed.

Currently, more than 20 states have enacted these statutes, which may affect your insurance renewal. Many insurance carriers are starting to place very low sublimit, or are excluding abuse and molestation on senior living and social services providers' umbrella or excess liability policies.

Litigation does not always target the perpetrator but instead the senior living and social services provider. In these cases, most providers are being sued due to failure to supervise, negligent hiring, or negligent training. According to a recent webinar from Philadelphia Insurance Companies:

- The average verdict is \$5 million per victim (across all states).
- The average settlement is \$750,000 – \$1.2 million per victim (across all states).

WHAT CAN PROVIDERS DO IN EFFORTS TO PREVENT ABUSE AND MOLESTATION?

Disclosure: Please be advised that this resource and the recommendations outlined below are not intended as legal advice and should not be used as or relied upon as legal advice. They are for general informational purposes only.

Consider reviewing your current abuse policy and updating it to be a fully integrated prevention program model, including but not limited to the following:

- Hire and screen an adequate number of employees, volunteers, and contractors.
- Provide in-depth training on abuse, neglect, mistreatment, misappropriation, and exploitation.
- Implement preventative operational risk management strategies.
- Confirm thorough internal and external reporting procedures.
- Implement investigation procedures following notification of suspected or confirmed abuse.
- Incorporate audits and monitoring.

HIRING AND SCREENING PRACTICES OF EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

90 percent of offenders do not have a criminal background according to a recent webinar from Philadelphia Insurance Companies. Consult with an attorney to ensure your screening and selection processes do not violate any state or federal laws prohibiting discrimination in the workplace.

- Background checks
- Reference checks
- Personal interviews
- Rigorous screening of applicants who will have autonomy
- Professional reference checks from past employers
- Personality tests/core value ranking
- Situational and behavioral interview questions
- Analysis of potential resume red flags

REGULAR TRAINING ON ABUSE

Training on abuse, neglect, mistreatment, exploitation, and misappropriation should be done upon hire, annually, and on an as-needed basis.

Topics may include:

- A clear understanding of appropriate vs. inappropriate communication and touch
- How to recognize behaviors that may lead to abuse or unethical conduct
- How to recognize signs of abuse (emotional, mental, and physical)
- Physical/neglect
- Emotional/mental
- Financial/misappropriation of property
- Gift giving to employee(s) or the organization
- Mandated reporting training
- Caring strategies for those with dementia
- Incorporating de-escalation training programs into your internal policies and procedures
- Resident/client rights
- An internal and external reporting process
- Supervisor training on investigation process and expectations

OPERATIONAL RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Have a grievance program.
 - Investigate all complaints through quality assurance performance improvement programs and have a response process. Investigations should not be a part of the resident or personnel record.
- Consider strategies to manage risk when an employee is alone with one client.
- When possible, encourage an open door/window policy during one-on-one interactions.
- Consider including a second individual in the room/enclosed area during private care situations.
- Change up the employee/client dynamic when possible, even if just to audit.

Continued on next page



THE WALA 83.15 EXPERIENCE

DATES

May 2021: Virtual Delivery
Week 1: May 18, 19, 20
Week 2: May 25, 26, 27
Week 3: June 1, 2, 3

This 60-hour, department approved course is offered in a total of nine days; three days per week for three consecutive weeks. Participants are required to attend the course in its entirety to be considered successfully completed. At the end of each course week, participants will take an open-book Learning Assessment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND
REGISTRATION, VISIT EWALA.ORG!

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Continued from page 11

REPORTING PROCEDURE

Providers are well served by having both internal and external reporting procedures in the event there are suspected or confirmed incidents of abuse, neglect, mistreatment, exploitation, or misappropriation of a resident's/client's property.

Internal Reporting:

- Stop and protect a resident/client from abuse, if applicable.
- Report immediately to the supervisor if he or she is not involved in the abuse.
 - Consider a hierarchal reporting structure, especially if the client sustains an injury.
 - Report immediately to a corporate compliance officer or through a secure hotline.
- Upon notification, the supervisor should immediately start the investigation procedure.

EXTERNAL REPORTING

Providers are well served by having a procedure in which a designee from the facility/organization reports to applicable third-party agencies. Providers should outline which agencies are to be reported to for which incidents, the timeframe in which to report, the method in which to report, and a clear description of what should be reported.

AUDITS AND MONITORING

Audits and monitoring should be done through an organization's quality assurance subcommittee. Findings should be reported to the quality assurance performance improvement team.

Action items or next steps will be assigned, including but not limited to the following:

- Review your abuse prevention program, at least annually and on an as-needed basis.
- Regularly conduct "unannounced" monitoring of one-on-one behaviors or interactions between employees/volunteers and clients.
- Conduct "unannounced" ridealongs during any typical one-on-one transportation between employees/volunteers and clients.
- Conduct regular satisfaction surveys and/or informal check-ins with clients, families, and employees.
- Formally check in with employees/volunteers during your annual review or at another scheduled time in which supervisors specifically ask about any known misconduct or unethical behavior.
- Respond to grievances in a timely manner.
- Use telematics to monitor the time and location of fleet vehicles.

- Investigation Procedures Following Notification
- Providers should consider implementing a formal investigation procedure in the event of suspected or confirmed abuse, neglect, mistreatment, exploitation, or misappropriation of property.
- Investigation should begin immediately following notification.
- Any alleged perpetrator should be removed or asked to restrain from the organization upon notification of suspected or confirmed abuse, neglect, mistreatment, exploitation, or misappropriation of property until the investigation is complete.
 - If the alleged perpetrator is an employee, consider placing the individual on administrative leave until the investigation is completed.
- Investigations cannot guarantee confidentiality of those involved or witnesses to the alleged incident.
- All witnesses or those with information regarding the alleged incident are to be interviewed immediately during the investigation procedure.
- The investigation process should be impartial, including avoiding presumptions, bias, and conflicts of interest.
 - Team members may need to exclude themselves if any of the above apply.
- The investigation should run concurrently with any third-party agency investigation.
- Refer to your record retention and release policy for the investigation document retention schedule, as well as any items that need to be released and to whom they need to be released.
- Once investigation is complete, determine the appropriate action for the alleged perpetrator(s) and document any corresponding action taken. overlapping layers of protection to ensure no situation is overlooked.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Many states are passing reviver statutes that may affect your insurance renewal. Senior living and social services providers would be best served to review their current abuse prevention program and consult their counsel regarding their policies and procedures.



ADVOCACY UPDATES

WISCONSIN BUDGET PROCESS BEGINS

Public Hearings Announced – Assisted Living Voices Need to be Loud

- Proposed: \$77.8 Million Increase to Family Care Caregiver Funding Initiative
- Proposed: Nursing Home & CBRF Rate Setting Methodology
- Proposed: Statewide HCBS Minimum Rate Band

Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers (D) released his proposed 1,846-page [2021-23 Wisconsin biennial state budget](#) to the legislature on February 16. The budget proposal has been introduced as [Assembly Bill 68](#) and [Senate Bill 111](#).

The Republican controlled Assembly and Senate announced four public hearings around the State. The Legislature's [Joint Committee on Finance](#) will have a website with the public hearing information and the virtual registration instructions when those become available. All in-person public hearings will begin at 10 a.m. and will follow the local public health guidance or that of the UW institution hosting the meeting.

- Friday, April 9 - at UW-Whitewater, Whitewater, Wisconsin
- Wednesday, April 21 - at the Hodag Dome, Rhinelander, Wisconsin
- Thursday, April 22 - at UW-Stout, Menomonie, Wisconsin
- Wednesday, April 28 – Virtual Public Hearing

For the virtual session, pre-registration will be required. More details on how to register will be announced at a later time.

WALA MEMBERS – IT'S TIME TO EDUCATE YOUR STATE SENATOR & ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVE

The Family Care system is broken and needs to be reformed.

Family Care has a direct impact on direct caregiver wages. Quality care depends on quality caregivers. It's difficult to attract quality caregivers when Family Care reimbursement tends to provide stagnant, reduced and low reimbursement to providers. Caregiver and staff costs account for nearly \$0.80 cents on every dollar spent in the overall assisted living facility budget.

Family Care capitation rates and provider reimbursement needs to recognize the actual competitive business market for quality employees. Accurate reflection of the competitive



aspect of the state and regional labor markets could promote worker retention and maintain quality care for elderly and persons with disabilities who rely on Family Care.

If we want change – assisted living needs to be heard...

If Wisconsin's long-term care profession wants to see change, we need the entire profession to advocate loudly for that change. We need you as an assisted provider to write, call and/or meet with your State Senator and State Assembly Representative between now and the end of April.

WHO ARE MY STATE LEGISLATORS

[Find your elected officials here](#)

WALA BUDGET PRIORITIES/TALKING POINTS

Please share [these requests](#) with your legislators.

It's time for you as an assisted living provider to tell your State Senator and Assembly Representative your story, your caregivers' stories, explain to them the financial challenges faced under Family Care – and why reform of the Family Care system is needed.

WISCONSIN LONG-TERM CARE WORKFORCE CRISIS

Results from a survey of long-term care providers in 2016 and 2018 exposed a caregiver workforce crisis. Data from the 2020 survey of 924 providers, together with information from other sources revealed:

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- A continued downward trend in the number of persons on the Wisconsin nurse aide registry

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When it comes to software for managing assisted living communities, one size does not fit all. Different jobs require different tools. By using a tool that is designed specifically to meet their needs, communities can enhance safety, resident care, operational efficiency, employee engagement and their operational and financial health.

DIFFERENT TOOLS TO MEET DIFFERENT NEEDS

In senior living today, managing operations through the continuum of care is critical. It's understandable that organizations seek a single software suite to use across their portfolio, believing it will streamline operations system-wide and enable communities to provide better service to residents.

But, for example, the core functions of assisted living and skilled nursing communities – pricing models, regulations and medication administration – are managed differently. So, when providers implement a single solution for both, they inevitably find that one or more entities is inadequately managed.

MANAGING MEDICATIONS AND CARES – THE ESSENTIAL FUNCTION

In selecting software for your assisted living community, the top priority should be finding a tool that is rooted in managing cares and medications while closely matching your workflow, regulations and billing structure. Anything not built upon that foundation will only hamper operational efficiency and leave staff frustrated.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Automation has incredible potential to help assisted living communities operate more safely and efficiently. And new, more powerful tools are being introduced every year, from menu planning to accounting, building automation and more. Assisted living software can help communities maximize these opportunities. In choosing software suites, communities should look for programs that are flexible enough to seamlessly integrate with the tools they use today and those they will use tomorrow.

A SIGN OF QUALITY

Finally, use of a comprehensive, specialized assisted living software suite is a tangible sign of quality – a valuable point of differentiation that you can leverage in your marketing program and to support your employee recruitment and retention efforts.

Prospective residents and their families will feel more confident choosing your community knowing that you use a real-time system of checks and balances to ensure residents' needs are met. You can distinguish your community by explaining how the software promotes quality care by documenting care plans, helping ensure caregivers know what to do, and greatly reducing the chance of human error in administering medications and cares.

For your current team of caregivers, having software that properly directs them and provides an intuitive method for ensuring they are providing the right care goes a long way toward improving morale and reducing stress. For prospective employees, it demonstrates your commitment to creating a great environment in which to work and giving your team the tools they need to deliver the best care possible.

Extended Care Professional (ECP) improves the businesses of assisted living communities worldwide — including assisted living, independent living, and group homes — with innovative technology, a deep understanding of the senior living industry, and a commitment to be an indispensable partner.

ECP offers a complete cloud-based management solution that helps senior living communities deliver better care, manage risk, operate efficiently, and attract new residents. The suite of products incorporates electronic medication administration records (eMAR), electronic health records (EHR), comprehensive care planning, facility management, staff training, reporting, billing, and marketing. It is interfaced with all leading pharmacy management systems. More information is available at ecp123.com or by calling 262-684-5600

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THE LEGAL EDGE

The Legal Edge is a regular feature column authored by the Assisted Living and Long Term Care Group at the [Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren law firm](#) featuring Bob Lightfoot, RN. Bob Lightfoot can be reached at 608-229-2257 or rlightfoot@reinhartlaw.com.

COMPLAINTS - DON'T LET THEM WALK THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR

I was reminded at the March 23rd Assisted Living Forum of something Alfred once told me working through a client regulatory dispute: Don't let complaints get through the front door.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

At the March 23rd Assisted Living Forum, Alfred showed a slide demonstrating that complaints continue to rise in Wisconsin assisted living. While most complaints are anonymous, we know that the highest rate of substantiated complaints come from residents, their legal representatives, families, advocates and medical personnel like hospitals. My legal work with providers also tells me that a large number of complaints come from disgruntled current and former employees.

The issue then becomes how to keep those complaints "in house". The best way is through good grievance procedures, practice, and communication. CBRFs, RCACs and AFHs are all required to have grievance procedures. A good grievance procedure should be in writing, discussed at admission, should describe how to file a grievance, should not involve facility personnel involved in the grievance issue, should be posted in a conspicuous location in the facility and should be free of

coercion or retaliation in response to the filing of a grievance.

Perhaps most important is a grievance procedure that is not in name only. Your grievance procedure should be a functional. "Living and breathing" as they say. It should be user friendly. If your grievance procedure is functioning properly, in most instances, residents, families and advocates will feel comfortable coming to you to resolve issues. That's exactly what you want - complaints handled internally! You want residents and families to feel comfortable raising their concerns, not shut out. Certainly, it's much more difficult to prevent disgruntled employees from filing complaints. It's going to happen. Some of those complaints are surgically written in an attempt, sometimes successfully, to sabotage a facility. But I also see many of those complaints come back unsubstantiated.

If the first time you hear about a problem or issue at your facility is when surveyors show up, you've let that complaint walk out the door. You let BAL see that complaint first. And THAT complaint is more likely to be substantiated.

Continued from page 14

- Caregiver vacancy rates in excess of 30% for adult family homes, a vital part of the long-term care continuum. One in three providers are limiting admissions due to caregiver vacancies
- Since 2018, inflation has increased by 4%, while median wages for direct care workers have been limited to only 2.3% growth
- The average occupancy of long-term and residential care providers could increase from 78% to 93% if there were enough caregivers to fill available positions
- Long-term care providers continue to be challenged with a lack of applicants for caregiving positions

Clearly the caregiver workforce crisis continues to be one of the most significant challenges facing providers of long-term and residential care services. Public and private efforts to deal with the workforce needs have helped but more needs to be done - especially as the state faces growth in the number of older persons, people with intellectual and physical disabilities, and individuals diagnosed with dementia.

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