



Connecticut Association of Not-for-profit Providers For the Aging

**Testimony of the Connecticut Association of Not-for-profit
Providers For the Aging**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Health

In support of

**Senate Bill 91, An Act Allowing Nursing Home to Establish Training Programs for Feeding
Assistants**

February 21, 2007

CANPFA members serve thousands of people every day through mission-driven, not-for-profit organizations dedicated to providing the services people need, when they need them, in the place they call home. Our members offer the continuum of aging services: assisted living residences, continuing care retirement communities, residential care homes, nursing homes, home and community based services, and senior housing.

The Connecticut Association of Not-for-profit Providers (CANPFA) supports the concept of allowing specially-trained staff to help nursing home residents with eating and drinking and we have been supportive of the state's the efforts to implement a CMS regulation that allows for the use of feeding assistants in nursing homes.

Often, a nursing home resident may need only a little help with managing eating utensils, or verbal encouragement to continue eating. Under those circumstances, the extra attention these residents receive from feeding assistants can make all the difference in the resident's quality of care and quality of life. In addition, the help these feeding assistants provide can free a facility's nursing staff to give more time to residents whose needs are more complicated.

A 2005 federal court ruling in *Resident Councils of Washington v. Leavitt*, upheld a regulation CMS issued in 2003 to allow the use of nutrition aides or "feeding assistants," in nursing homes. In its opinion, the court agreed with CMS that under the conditions specified in the rule, feeding assistants help meet nursing home residents' nutrition and hydration needs. The rule specifies the training that feeding assistants must receive, requires supervision by a registered or licensed nurse and allows feeding assistants to help only residents whose eating problems are medically uncomplicated, as assessed by a care team of professional staff. The court also noted that the rule does not allow feeding assistants to be counted in the nursing staff totals that nursing homes are required to post daily.

CANPFA members are encouraged by the support that this concept has received and look forward to seeing proposed feeding assistant regulations approved that will allow for their use and enhance the care of nursing home residents.

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