REASONS RESIDENTS DO NOT ROUTINELY EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS

1. Residents are intimidated by the idea of appearing in any way to criticize the nursing home.

2. Most residents do not know that they have specified rights and do not know what their rights are in a nursing home.

3. Most residents do not even think about their problems and concerns in any context related to their “rights.”

4. Residents have very few opportunities to exercise control over their lives or to have intellectual discussions.

5. Residents have few relationships in which to practice interactive or assertiveness skills or negotiate their rights.

6. Even residents who are aware of their rights must choose their “battles” and often put up with daily violations of their individuality and dignity because:
   a) It requires too much strength to challenge each encounter;
   b) They are easily labeled troublemakers;
   c) They are dependent for their basic care on those very people and, therefore, hesitant to criticize, and, often,
   d) They experience a sense of defeatism.

7. Most residents have come to accept that many of their rights are violated as a part of the daily nursing home routine and, therefore, would never articulate them as problems about which anything can be done.

8. Many residents face a tension between their desire for independence and their need for assistance.

9. Residents often feel more comfortable championing another’s problem than asking for help for themselves.

10. Residents face physical, emotional, psychological, social, and/or mental disabilities that make it difficult for them to voice their concerns.

11. Residents’ autonomy is undermined from the start by the very fact that most residents would rather not be in a nursing home; many did not have much of a role or choice in the decision to be there, and most have no other options.

Source: National Citizens’ Coalition for Nursing Home Reform, Nursing Home Residents’ Rights Project, 1828 L Street, NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC 20036
OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTING RESIDENTS’ RIGHTS

1. Many residents do not know about or understand their rights.
2. Most residents feel that asserting rights is a negative thing to do.
3. To exercise their rights, residents need the physical care necessary to promote self-reliance and renewed strength, such as: appetizing food to suit their nutritional needs, rehabilitative and restorative therapy, meaningful activities, and freedom from over-medication and over-restraint.
4. Residents who do assert their rights often face tremendous resistance from every level of staff, that discourages them and makes it nearly impossible for them to succeed.
5. Most residents do not have many social supports inside or outside the home to encourage or assist them to live to their fullest.
6. Most Resident Councils do not receive the leadership development they need to function effectively.
7. Many Resident Councils meet resistance from staff when they voice concerns.
8. Few families understand residents’ rights or know how to empower their relatives to maintain self-determination.
9. Most nursing homes are run in a very regimented, institutional fashion, that leaves little room for individuality, free expression, personal autonomy, or choice.
10. Most nursing homes provide few opportunities to foster relationships.
11. Many staff do not know about nor understand residents’ rights.
12. Very few supervisory and managerial personnel understand residents’ rights.
13. Sometimes staff feel threatened by “residents’ rights.”
14. Staff is often poorly trained in residents’ rights.
15. Often, staff is not treated in a manner respectful of their own rights.
16. Short staffing prevents staff from taking the time necessary to treat residents respectfully in routine care and treatment.
17. Staff is used to “caring for” residents and do not know how to empower and enable residents to care for themselves.
18. It takes longer to help someone do something for himself/herself than to do it for him/her.
19. Many staff perceive residents’ concerns and recommendations as too bothersome and another demand on an already burdensome schedule.
20. Most staff and others see residents’ disabilities instead of their abilities.

Source: National Citizens’ Coalition for Nursing Home Reform, Nursing Home Residents’ Rights Project, 1828 L Street, NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC 20036
1. Educate residents and their families about their rights

2. Educate and sensitize every level of staff about residents’ rights.

3. Incorporate resident participation and self-determination into every aspect of nursing home services (e.g., resident advisory committees for food services, activities, housekeeping).

4. Provide more support to workers, including sufficient staffing ratios, training, better supervision, dignified working conditions, and increased salaries and benefits.

5. Orient nursing assistants to the residents they will work with, and promote relationship building between staff and aides.

6. Utilize the information and wisdom of residents and their representatives to help develop and conduct training programs for staff.

7. Help staff, residents, and families overcome the tension between dependence and empowerment. Residents need assistance, but the help they receive should increase their ability to help themselves.

8. Establish a grievance committee comprised of residents, family, staff, and administration.

9. Encourage and promote an open exchange of ideas, recommendations, and concerns throughout the facility among residents, families, staff, and administration.

10. Build more private rooms for individual residents and public rooms for private use by residents as needed.

11. Promote a sense of community within the nursing home. For example, organize activities for each wing and each floor or design activities that promote interaction and intellectual and emotional stimulation.