

February 21, 2013

Chairwoman O'Brien and Members of House Children and Seniors Committee,

As a registered nurse with over 35 years of practice in hospitals, long term care facilities and for the last 18 years in home health and hospice, I feel I am an expert in patient care needs. As the Chief Executive Officer of Douglas County Visiting Nurses for the last 7 years, I have participated in a number of studies to determine "best practice" when caring for patients. I consider the issue of increasing the current minimum nursing staffing in nursing homes to be question of "best practice" to improve patient outcomes.

The current minimum nursing staffing standard in Kansas of two hours per patient per day is not enough time to provide the care needed for that resident of a long term care facility. Community based care is now the standard for all but the most fragile senior or disabled adult. Those individuals now residing in and depending on care in a facility often have no choice but long term care. In many cases, those individuals may be incontinent of urine and feces. If they do not receive the care and attention needed, bedsores can form quickly. A bedfast resident is also at high risk for pneumonia due to lying in one position too long. To prevent complications, a resident should be turned and repositioned every 30 minutes.

Costly hospitalization can occur for those residents that do not receive adequate care and support. The cost of requiring increased staffing is offset by the higher cost of care to heal a bed sore wound or treat pneumonia with antibiotics. It is true in this case that you will have to spend more money on improved staffing to prevent an even higher cost of care for the hospitalized patient.

Early in my nursing education, a well respected teacher told my class of Freshmen nursing students to treat and care for every patient as if they were a member of your family....your mother, father, grandmother, grandfather. Don't you expect your loved ones to have the care they deserve and need? At a minimum, the recommended nurse staffing should be a total of 4 hours and 48 minutes.

Thank you for allowing me to share my views.

Sincerely,

Judith A. Bellome, RN, BSNEd, MSED

