

Board & Care Quality

F O R U M

Published by Reisacher Petro and Associates

Vol. 11

No. 6

November/December 2008

The Center for Excellence in Assisted Living: Helping Maximize Quality in All Homes

The Center for Excellence in Assisted Living (CEAL) was created in 2004 from a recommendation made by the Assisted Living Workgroup (ALW). Established at the request of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging in 2001, the ALW brought together almost 50 organizations for a period of 18 months to develop recommendations to guide how quality in assisted living facilities could be ensured. Of 110 recommendations generated by the ALW, the first listed in the report was for the establishment of an organization that would continue the ALW's work in seeking ways to maximize quality of services in assisted living, as well as serving as an information clearinghouse about assisted living and quality.

CEAL is a non-profit collaborative of eleven national organizations. One member from each serves on the Board of Directors. The organizations intentionally reflect a balance in key stakeholder interests in assisted living, including advocates and assisted living providers. CEAL also has an Advisory Council in which numerous additional key stakeholders participate. The Editor of the Board and Care Quality Forum was recently invited to membership on the CEAL Advisory Council.

Karen Love, Managing Director of CEAL, was one of its founding members. A graduate of Radford University in Virginia, Karen started her education with the goal of becoming a speech pathologist. While attending graduate school at George Washington University (GW), she worked in the Department of Health Care Administration. While working there, she realized she was drawn to health care administration rather than to speech pathology so instead, she earned a certificate in gerontology from GW.

Karen served as the administrator of a 60 bed assisted living facility in northern Virginia, as well as the administrator of a continuing care retirement community that included two assisted living facilities. Her love for the concept of assisted living, combined with the industry's rapid growth—sometimes to the exclusion of a focus on resident care and needs—moved her to found the Consumer Consortium on Assisted Living (CCAL). CCAL is a national nonprofit consumer-based organization focused on the needs, rights, and protection of assisted living consumers, their caregivers, and loved ones.

In this interview, Karen discusses the mission and goals of CEAL, ways in which the recommendations of the ALW can guide the operations of small homes, and resources available through CEAL to enable home owners and operators to maximize quality of services.

Please tell me a little bit about the origins of CEAL, and how CEAL defines “assisted living.”

“While the recommendation for the creation of CEAL was the first in the ALW's report, it was actually one of the last recommendations fashioned. It took everyone a long time to realize that, if we were going to continue our work together, we needed to have some mechanism or forum to do so formally.

“Our belief is that to have anything be effective and sustainable, you have to work with all of the key stakeholders involved, and that is exactly what we have done with CEAL. It is a diverse stakeholder collaborative of eleven national organizations,

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