

# Psychosocial Well-being

## Quality of Life and Residents' Rights

Rights are things a person is entitled to. Residents are individuals who have the same human and legal rights as all U.S. citizens. They have a right to be treated with respect and dignity, to pursue a meaningful life, to be free from fear. All residents have the right to high-quality care. The facility and its staff must protect and promote each resident's rights. Violating a resident's rights is breaking the law, and punishment can include being fired, fined, or sent to jail.

In 1987, a federal law called the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, was passed. Since then, this law, also known as OBRA '87 or the Nursing Home Reform Act, has been updated several times. This law guarantees the rights of residents in long term care facilities. Basic care aides must understand residents' rights and know how to protect them while delivering care. In general, residents have the right to a dignified existence, to self-determination, and to communication with and access to persons and services inside and outside the facility. Facilities must care for residents in a manner that promotes maintenance or enhancement of each resident's quality of life.

Residents have many specific rights, listed in the Residents' Bill of Rights.

## Honoring a Resident's Life

How can you best understand each resident in your care? Ask the resident or his or her family or friends what the person likes and dislikes. Ask about where they grew up, what traditions they follow, their job or volunteer experiences, and what they like to do to relax. You can also learn more about a resident's background from nurses, therapists, and social workers. Remember that your initial perceptions about a resident may not always be accurate. Learning about residents' values, culture, religion, home environment, travels, and professional and personal experiences will help you promote their dignity by honoring who they are as individuals (Figure 1-1).



**Figure 1-1** Residents have had many interesting life experiences. You will enjoy getting to know them.

It is important to make an effort to understand who the residents are when they enter your facility. And, equally important is what you can do to help residents transition from their past lives to their new life in the facility. You can encourage them to bring personal items for their rooms and to talk about their past while getting used to their present situation. For example, you can learn about past habits and preferences and help them find new ways to do the same or similar things now. Although the setting may be different, they need to know that their quality of life can still be good.

DISCLAIMER: AHCA/NCAL has created this course to assist providers to recruit and train temporary staff during the national emergency caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Federal and/or state requirements may need to be waived to permit individuals under this training program in your location. Employers should check with their state survey agencies and their state occupational licensing agencies where applicable to ensure individuals trained under this program are permitted to assist with care in your location.