What Matters in Quality of Residential Care?
Analyzing Characteristics that Influence Quality-of-Care in Personal Care Homes

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Policy Context:
The Department of Public Welfare (DPW) of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania licenses and regulates Personal Care Homes (PCHs), a critical and high-profile component of Pennsylvania’s social safety net. Over 1,600 licensed PCHs provide lodging, food and some support services for approximately 52,000 residents who are elderly or who have mental or physical disabilities. These individuals are unable to live independently but do not require 24 hour nursing services in a licensed nursing care facility. Typically, residents of PCHs need help with dressing, feeding, taking medications, mobility issues and finances. In many cases, they are low-income individuals.

Problem Statement:
Generally, personal care home operators provide a clean, safe, and comfortable environment for residents. However, the actual level of service and quality-of-care provided to residents varies greatly from facility to facility; some facilities frequently violate Commonwealth PCH licensing regulations and are cited for regulatory violations. In order to improve the quality of PCH services, the Commonwealth would like to better understand the relationship between quality-of-care indicators and characteristics of the PCH operating environment that may influence these outcomes.

By identifying variables associated with consistent and high quality of PCH care, the Commonwealth can achieve two goals: direct resources toward strengthening select PCH operating environment variables on a state-wide basis, and identify PCHs at elevated risk for serious violations or closure.

Typical measures of PCH quality of care include:
- Resident and family satisfaction
- License status
- Evidence of regulatory violations
- Registered complaints
- Self-reported incidents and accidents.

Characteristics of the PCH operating environment include:
- PCH-level variables
  - Service charges
  - Funding sources (SSI, Veterans, benevolent funds, private pay, etc.)
  - Staff educational qualifications
  - Staff continuing education and training
  - Profit/non-profit status
  - Facility size
- Family and community variables
  - Community socio-economic characteristics
- Strength of ties between PCH and host community
- Family socio-economic characteristics
- Level of family involvement in resident care

This project consists of a number of interrelated tasks: collection of administrative data from the Commonwealth and personal care homes; field data on PCH and community characteristics based on interviews and first-hand observations; development of a program evaluation framework to link inputs, process outputs and social outcomes, and descriptive and exploratory data analysis. These tasks will culminate in recommendations to DPW regarding economic incentives, technical assistance, community outreach and other, primarily non-regulatory means to improve PCH quality of care.

**Skills Required:**

Team members should be strongly motivated by a desire to improve human services provision, especially to vulnerable and low-income populations. Team members should be comfortable with qualitative and quantitative data collection, program evaluation and data analysis. Team members should also be willing to perform extensive on-site observations, data collection and interviews.

**Advisory Board:**

Representatives of the personal care home community (TBD)

Academic and professional experts in community-based human services (TBD)