

Nursing Home ‘Fight Club’ Shows Need for Training, Background Checks

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Three women working at a nursing home have been arrested and charged with assault after engaging in elder abuse, pushing a patient, and encouraging a physical altercation between two residents. The incident was recorded, showing none of the employees stepped in to stop the fight.

The patients, who had dementia, were at the facility and should have received care that made them feel safe. Instead, they were physically abused and encouraged to fight one another, with employees looking on as the fight progressed to punching and choking. Rather than stepping in, one of the employees called out to the resident to punch the other in the face, still not intervening even when the resident called out for help.

A deeper look at the facility uncovered several failures to protect and care for its residents. A North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services report shows that as of July, none of the facility’s employees had undergone the proper training. Patient charts also showed that some weren’t receiving medications as they should be, with one patient not getting their medication for seventeen days.

Background checks necessary to prevent abuse

At a large majority of facilities, there are often nurses working hard to keep up with the large workload assigned to them. Even in these situations, it remains critical to provide adequate training and conduct thorough background checks to ensure quality care. Residents are often vulnerable and unable to advocate for themselves and high-quality background checks of potential employees including searches for theft, assault and general mistreatment, can help reduce instances of abuse.

Federal and state regulations are in effect to protect residents in long-term care facilities and prevent the hiring of individuals who may be a danger to residents. Under federal law, elder care facilities are prohibited from hiring anyone with a history of patient abuse. While these checks are mandatory, the extent and type of background check is left to the discretion of the facility. Unfortunately there are many facilities who do the minimum amount of checking required, which can lead to negligent hiring and have unfortunate consequences for patients.

Long-term nursing facilities will often conduct less thorough background searches in an effort to save

on costs, but at the expense of their residents' safety.

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