



STATE OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

161 Delaware Avenue Delmar, NY 12054-1393

Richard F. Daines, M.D.  
*Commissioner*

Wendy E. Saunders  
*Executive Deputy Commissioner*

May 8, 2009

**DAL:** *DRS/ACF DAL # 09-02*  
**SUBJECT:** *Companion Services in Adult Care Facilities*

Dear Administrator:

The purpose of this letter is to clarify the role of resident companions in adult care facilities in New York State. “Companions” are individuals who provide social and non-personal care supports to a resident; a companion may be hired and paid for by either the resident or the resident’s family. Examples of some support tasks that may be appropriately provided by a companion are as follows:

- providing company to the resident
- reading to the resident
- watching TV/movies with the resident
- retrieving/delivering things (shopping, mail, and errands)
- taking the resident on trips
- providing advice on what to wear/personal appearance
- escorting the resident to meals and activities

Companion tasks are generally things that a resident could do for themselves which do not require facility staff. If an employee of the facility is acting as a companion for a resident, he/she cannot do that during hours that he/she is scheduled as a facility employee. The facility is responsible for providing or arranging all required services for all residents, regardless of whether an individual resident may have a paid or volunteer companion. The facility may not depend on the services of the companion as meeting the requirements of care for the resident.

Facilities must have policies and procedures in place regarding resident companions. For screening purposes, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines “employees” as all paid and unpaid persons working or volunteering in a long term care facility, therefore policies and procedures must address TB testing for companions. The NYSDOH employee screening requirements applies to all workers. Also, adult care facilities must address in their policy and procedures whether companions may stay overnight with residents, and if so, clear guidelines must be in place on issues such as night coverage and emergency evacuation. Facilities that

allow companions to stay overnight must have adequate square footage in the room in which the companion will be staying, and must count the overnight companion in the census for safety and fire policies and procedures.

Companions may not provide personal care services which are the responsibility of the facility. Companions cannot interfere with the orderly operation of the facility or rights of other residents. It is imperative that facilities recognize that the operator/facility remains ultimately responsible for all care and services provided to the residents of a facility. **Services provided by a companion may not replace those which the adult care facility is required by law or regulation to provide.** Facilities are cautioned against relying on companions for any services it must provide, including supervision and awareness of a resident's needs. At all times, the facility remains responsible for monitoring and supervising a resident's well-being, even when a resident has a companion.

Thank you for your continuing efforts to provide quality care to the residents of your facility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jackie Pappalardi".

Jacqueline Pappalardi  
Director  
Division of Residential Services