



Pioneer
Network

Changing the culture of aging in the 21st century

August 13, 2008

Dear Advocates of Culture Change,

The Pioneer Network is dedicated to making fundamental changes in values and practices to create a culture of aging that is life-affirming, satisfying, humane, and meaningful. To advance these goals, the Pioneer Network has joined with the other national organizations to support and promote the work of *Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes*. The exceptional work being done by the Campaign and the individual nursing homes that are participating is already significantly impacting the quality of resident care.

The *Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Home* campaign is urging nursing homes across the country to establish targets for change in the way residents are cared for, direct staff are assigned, and resident and family satisfaction is valued. Through this work, long-term care environments will continue to transform into humane homes for our most vulnerable population. The *Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Home* campaign has also built in the important component of consumer and staff involvement and input so that ongoing dialogues can be created, supported, and advanced among providers, consumers, funders, and other stakeholders. These components of the campaign complement the mission, purpose, and goals of the Pioneer Network.

The Pioneer Network was formed in 1997 by a small group of prominent professionals in long-term care to advocate for person-centered care in nursing homes. This approach represented a radical change in the culture of aging, moving away from institutional provider-driven models to more human consumer-focused models that embrace flexibility and self-determination. This continuing effort is the nucleus of the culture change movement.

Culture change, or deep system change, refers to the transformation of nursing homes from an institutional to a person-directed model. Techniques associated with this model include creating home, flexibility in sleep and dining schedules, autonomy in personal choices, and a less-bureaucratic organizational approach. The *values* of culture change are those of choice, dignity, respect, self-determination, and purposeful living so that in *practice*, the voices of our frail elderly and those working with them are considered and respected.

The Pioneer Network has achieved many milestones to date, all which reflect the values of culture change and its supporters, and lend themselves to support of the *Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Home* campaign. Today, the Pioneer Network is a center for thought leaders and innovators in the field of aging who are focused on building home and a sense of community for older adults—wherever home may be.

We look forward to continuing our work with the *Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Home* campaign, and urge our partners, supporters, and state coalitions to lend their backing as well.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Kantor, Sc.D.
Executive Director

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