

# Convoys of Care:

## Developing Collaborative Care Partnerships in Assisted Living<sup>1</sup>

**Purpose:** Our focus is on understanding residents' care arrangements in order to learn how to support caregivers in ways that build collaborative care partnerships, improve resident and caregiver quality of life, and facilitate residents' ability to age in place in assisted living and personal care homes.

**Approach:** We will study 8 care communities between 2013 and 2018. To date, we have completed the first wave of the study. We conducted 142 in-depth interviews and had at least weekly or bi-monthly contact with 28 residents and their care convoys (i.e. networks) for a 2-year period in 4 communities in and around Atlanta.

**Findings:** During the first wave, we found: care convoys contain a wide range of care partners (family, friends, assisted living staff, and a variety of health care workers); change over time is common; residents' care needs are greater than was true in the past and require complex care arrangements; resident self-care, including for those with cognitive impairment, is important for resident autonomy and independence; and communication and collaboration within care convoys can promote residents' ability to age in place and affect care quality.

**Recommendations:** Strong care convoys shared some important characteristics and led to good outcomes.

- **Care plans and consensus.** Establishing (and maintaining) clear, well understood, agreed upon, and up-to-date care plans and goals is crucial for quality care and positive care experiences.
- **Communication.** Ongoing, direct, and clear communication among convoy members is essential and leads to good care and partnerships.
- **Collaboration.** Collaboration between staff, residents, families, and others should be encouraged and fostered in an ongoing way. Strategies might include regular social events and care meetings.
- **Responsiveness.** Convoys are complex and dynamic, which means members must be responsive to change; communication and collaboration strategies may need to vary by resident and over time.
- **Leadership.** Absence of convoy leadership and consensus can have negative outcomes for resident care and their ability to age in place as well as for caregivers.
- **Resident self-care.** Self-care helps to maintain and promote independence and autonomy. It requires support, encouragement, and occasionally time and patience on the part of other convoy members.
- **Contributions of family and friends.** Families play an essential role in promoting and supporting informal caregivers and their involvement in residents' lives and care activities.
- **Centrality of assisted living staff.** Staff play a critical role in monitoring changes to resident health, care needs, and abilities and preferences. Recognizing and supporting staff on an ongoing basis can promote satisfaction and care quality.
- **Coresident relationships.** Fostering positive, supportive co-resident relationships can lead to additional monitoring, advocacy, and instrumental and socioemotional support for assisted living residents.

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