

Launch of the Wyoming Culture Change Coalition

What Is Culture Change?

Why don't most people want to live in an institution?

The simple answer: It doesn't feel like home. If you have been in a typical institution, you probably observed beeping call lights, alarms, overhead paging, rolling carts, medications being pounded—noises that are anything but homey; one large dining room where everyone eats every meal of the same food at the same time whether they are hungry or not; rooms shared by strangers and residents being awakened on someone else's timetable. Sadly, many people in institutions experience loneliness while dealing with loss of independence, loss of home, loss of so many things.

When a person moves into a home, it should feel like just that. And when someone comes into your home to help take care of you, it should still feel like your home.

Nursing homes, assisted living residences, home health agencies, adult day programs, rehab centers and hospitals across the country are changing to be more person-centered, thanks to the national culture change movement of over 20 years. With the support of Mountain-Pacific Quality Health, Carmen Bowman, a national leader in promoting culture change, is helping launch a culture change coalition in Wyoming.

What does culture change look like?

Some pioneers are building small houses, where people can get skilled nursing care, including one in Wyoming. Others are remodeling old nursing homes into households with private rooms and kitchens and refrigerators that are accessible any time. Even in older buildings, many changes are happening such as "open dining," where residents can eat according to their own schedules. Kitchens are transforming into restaurant services with food to order, salad bars and family-style dining. To promote better mood and rest and to reduce depression and anxiety, residents are not awakened arbitrarily in the middle of the night or in the morning. Instead, natural awakening is supported. Finally, those who are staying in their homes are getting the extra care and support they need the way they want it. Here are some examples:

- The Eden Alternative model (www.edenalt.org) has made many inroads to change institutional culture, helping residents thrive. Three Wyoming communities have committed to the 10 Eden Alternative Principles and are on the Eden Registry: Mission at Castle Rock Rehabilitation Center in Green River (www.missionhealthservices.org), Morning Star Care Center in Washakie (www.esthealth.org) and St. John's Living Center in Jackson (www.tetonhospital.org).

- The Green House Project (www.thegreenhouseproject.org) promotes small nursing homes built as homes where approximately 10 people live as an outgrowth of the Eden Alternative. Green House Living for Sheridan (www.sheridangreenhouse.org) is the one Green House Project home in Wyoming.
- Action Pact (www.actionpact.com) consults, publishes resources, leads the creation of household model nursing homes and has many free downloadable resources.
- The Pioneer Network is a national organization promoting culture change (www.pioneernetwork.net).

To learn more about the Wyoming Culture Change Coalition, to receive coalition emails or to get involved and help create change that focuses on people living the way they want to live, contact Carmen Bowman at carmen@edu-catering.com or at (303) 981-7228, or contact Pat Fritz with Mountain-Pacific Quality Health at pfritz@mpqhf.org or at (307) 568-2797.

About Mountain-Pacific—Mountain-Pacific Quality Health is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation and holds federal and state contracts that allow them to oversee the quality of care for Medicare and Medicaid members. Mountain-Pacific works within its region (Montana, Wyoming, Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific Territories of Guam and American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) to help improve the delivery of health care and the systems that provide it. Mountain-Pacific's goal is to increase access to high-quality health care that is affordable, safe and of value to the patients they serve. www.mpqhf.org

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