



OUR MISSION

Our mission is to represent the adult care facilities industry in Ohio and advocate for the individuals with mental illness who live in these homes.

ADULT CARE FACILITIES ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF GROWING PEOPLE

By Rachel Gearing

As an association, we say it all the time: adult care facilities do not just provide a roof over a person's head. They provide an environment that can foster recovery and stability individuals with serious mental illnesses very much need.

Operators in the industry know that it can sometimes be tricky to maintain stability when you are dealing with people who are very ill. Maintaining the stability of your residents can be the difference between keeping an orderly house or one that is frequently damaged. It can mean the difference between a calming environment for your residents or a chaotic one.

Home operators are asked to play many different roles in the lives of their residents. They not only cook and clean, they develop policies and procedures, supervise staff, go to doctor's appointments, etc. Many of the operators in our association act as family to individuals who have next to nothing.

According to the American Residential Treatment Association, "The family-like atmosphere of group homes is a major therapeutic tool, providing increased quality of life and continued growth. Residential treatment in a group home helps people with psychiatric disorders repair self-esteem,

build skills, develop relationships, and learn to manage their mental health symptoms."

Research shows there are certain components that make group housing successful. Residents need a sense of community, access to support in the event of a crisis, assistance with learning living skills, and a liaison with health care providers.

This means it's not just about the physical environment in a home. You can have a nice home, but if the staff are cold and uninterested in the thoughts and feelings of their residents, that environment is not going to help residents in the long-term. This compassion is not something that can be taught. It's an

inherent characteristic of our best operators.

Group housing can create lasting relationships between operators and residents and between residents. Isolation can occur among people with serious mental illnesses living in independent housing and it represents a major barrier to improvement. The type of social support group homes provide is a critical component of housing stability.

A resident of Gussie Tee Collins Family Care Home in Cincinnati, describes this perfectly, "I've seen how life can be



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when no one cares and I now see in retrospect how beautiful most people are and I have awoken to life.” She described how Pat Parker, the home operator, gradually chipped away at her shell over the course of four years by encouraging her to partake in new activities and never give up.

Skills, relationships, symptom management, self-esteem—these are all intangible things residents can gain from living in a group environment. As a home operator, you may be thinking, “how am I supposed to do all of that, and cook, clean, prepare for state surveys, etc.?” There is no doubt it is a tough and daunting task.

Those who are new to the industry don’t have to worry about getting everything perfect at once. Operators who have been doing this for a long time will tell you it is a process to figure out what works and what doesn’t. It’s a learning process that can be helped by the advice and assistance of other operators who are doing things right. The common thread is always caring about each resident as a human being with wants and likes.

In addition, it is possible in some cases to utilize area resources and assets. For example, many homes have residents who attend day programs in the community. Others utilize volunteers to interact with residents and play games. One home organizes in-house and themed gatherings to entertain elderly residents. A willing community can help support a home operator’s efforts and make an impact on the lives of residents, but the operator is always at the forefront leading.

One of the best examples of a home that has mastered this type of environment is Dubose Adult Care Facility in Cincinnati. While the home is located in an urban area, walking into the backyard is like walking into an oasis.



The staff at Dubose Adult Care Facility work with residents to learn skills and promote activities they enjoy. They take the time to learn about their residents and what they like to do.

The home operator, Eleanor Croley, enlists the help of residents who are interested to build an extensive garden in the backyard of the home. In June, visitors can see herbs and vegetables growing tall.

The garden gives residents something outside themselves to be accountable for.

With gardening, if you neglect watering, the plants will wither and die. If you water the plants and care for them, they will grow and produce food. For a resident who might want to sleep all day, something like gardening can motivate them to get outside.

Since residents often have a history of frequent hospitalizations, homelessness, substance abuse, etc., they need time to stabilize and begin to open up. Just like a garden grows, so do people.

At Dubose Adult Care Facility and other high-quality adult care facilities across the state of Ohio, residents are given the tools they need to lead a better life than what was possible before they moved in. Staff go above and beyond to ensure

their residents are safe, clean, and stable.

Their work speaks for itself in having full houses and people who refer to their homes because they know people will be well taken care of.

While it does take effort to make sure residents are learning skills, gaining self-esteem, etc., the investment can lead to residents that are more stable and feel they are part of a community. This is what makes adult care facilities so beneficial for those with mental illnesses. It is also how a house becomes a home.

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—American Residential Treatment Association

ACF SPOTLIGHT: TREASURED HOMES

By: Alan Johnson



After nearly 20 years in the long-term care business, Kim Cunningham took a leap of faith and opened her own family home in September of 2017.

Almost a year later, Cunningham says the work as the operator of Kim's Treasured Home in Toledo is still challenging, but the rewards are bountiful.

"The best part for me is that I love working with this clientele, basically being a helper to others," she said. "It gives me

insight on people's behavior and how to make them feel comfortable. I like to give them a second change to be in the community."

Cunningham currently has two male residents, but has space for five at her home in Toledo. She said it has been difficult getting referrals for people to come to her home. However she's undaunted and hopes, in time, to fill her existing family home and open a new one.

Cunningham said she has worked during her career in a variety of positions, including social worker, activities

director and corrections. "I've always worked with the elderly population. It's what I enjoy the most. You're learning from them and they're learning from you."

She gave up her outside employment to concentrate on running Kim's Treasured Homes. It's no latchkey

operation; Cunningham lives only five minutes away from the home and is there three times a day, preparing meals and eating with the residents. She also enjoys doing crafts and other activities with them, in addition to accompanying them on doctor visits and other appointments.

She gets help with many of the heavy chores, including outdoor works, by her husband.

Like other Ohioans operating group homes for people with mental illness and other disabilities, Cunningham is quick to acknowledge it's not a get-rich-quick kind of business. "You don't get that many referrals out there in the community. Its hard marketing. I have this much experience and I would love to have another home someday."

She thoroughly enjoys the "second chance" aspect of operating the home.

"The two gentlemen I have don't even have family," she said. "I'm all they got. I think of them like my family. When I'm out shopping, I think, 'I bet you one of my residents would like this.'"

Cunningham said building trust with her residents is difficult initially. "You want to make sure trust is built. They may have been to different places and they're scared. I've got to figure out how to get them to talk to me. It takes time."

"The best part is when we get over that and I can make them comfortable," she added. "I don't call it a group home. This is assisted living."





INTRODUCING: A FAMILY GUIDE TO FINDING AND FUNDING GROUP HOUSING

By Rachel Gearing

During my time as Associate Director of the Ohio Adult Care Facilities Association, I have received over 300 calls from people looking for housing.

Often, those looking for housing for a loved one with mental illness have no idea where to start. Navigating the mental health system can be difficult at best for those who aren't experts in its ins and outs.

There are new terms to learn, different funding sources, and multiple players they may have to work through. It can be overwhelming and confusing for any family member just trying to get their loved one some help.

I tend to start by asking the caller a standard round of questions. How old is the individual? Are they on Medicaid? Are they on social security? What are their

care needs?

If group housing does sound like the best option for the individual, this leads into a lot of important information caregivers must know about funding housing and finding an appropriate placement. Quite frankly, it's a lot.

To help families, case managers, and caregivers, we created a guide that includes information on housing options available in Ohio and how to access them, with details on adult care facilities, now known as class two facilities.

This guide is now posted under the "ACF Locator" tab on our website to be readily available for those who need it. It is our hope this information will be a helpful comprehensive resource to educate families.

http://ohioadultcarefacilitiesassociation.org/ACF_housing_locator.htm

WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING?

By: Elizabeth Tilley

When no one is watching, we as Class 2 Adult Care Facility/Group Home owners must self-reflect as to why we choose to continue to provide housing for people diagnosed with a mental illness. Caring for our residents when they don't say good morning, please, thank you, good after noon, or even good night can be difficult. These are simple pleasantries that may never be exchanged between our clients and ourselves in our daily conversations. Even with that being said, we should care for each and every one of them as if they are family members.

When no one is watching, are we exercising integrity? Are we showing love to those that at times it's difficult to show love to? Do you know that as a caregiver, this is a very important role, especially to someone who needs care? The path of a caregiver is a very noble one and no amount of money can make one person care for another. Money can allow you to do more but if a person is not caring, then more money in payment will not enhance the ability to give care.

When no one is watching, we should do these things: provide a clean, safe environment (home/facility), prepare healthy, wholesome meals for our residents (the same as we would eat), and treat our residents as we would like to be treated – "Do unto another as you would like done unto you." We must be respectful to our residents as we want to be respected by them and others who are watching.

Charity begins at home when no one is watching! Thank you to those who do a great job and to those who are trying. Please try harder. If you need to, ask for information from other caregivers because one day you may have to reside in a facility and at that time in your life you will want to receive the best care possible and have the best caregiver available.

Dear reader,

I am sad to say this will be my last letter written on behalf of the Ohio Adult Care Facilities Association. Although I very much enjoy the work I do, I am starting a new adventure in life by moving to Georgia. I hope to be able to make a sizable impact on the lives of people living with mental illnesses in this state.

I started my time with the Ohio Adult Care Facilities Association not knowing much about these homes and what they are like. Looking back, I cherish the experience of being able to delve in head first and learn as much as I possibly could. There was definitely a lot to learn, but I welcomed the challenge.

I have met some of the best, most selfless people through working for this association. My favorite part of the job was visiting homes and meeting operators and their residents. I heard stories of lives changed and transformed by housing and a caring hand. I will continue to carry these stories with me in my heart and in future career endeavors.

I am proud of the work that has been accomplished in the past year to expand this association and offer more assistance to operators. Without the effort of dedicated member operators who always offered help, we would not have been able to achieve what we did in the past year. Thank you.

I will truly miss working for the association and will especially miss the friendships I feel lucky to have developed. I have put my heart and soul into this organization and I hope that showed during my time in this position.

I am confident through the dedication of the new Associate Director and the commitment of member operators, the association will continue to grow and do more to advocate for this industry and the people with serious illnesses who live in these homes.

If you have any questions about this transition, please feel free to reach out to me at rachel@namiohio.org and I will try my best to make sure your question is answered.

Best always,

Rachel Gearinger

WELCOME!

The Ohio Adult Care Facilities Association welcomes Emy-Lynn Smoot, who will replace Rachel as the coordinator for the association and work closely with Terry.

In her role with OACFA, Emy-Lynn will be advocating for residents of group homes and those individuals who care for them like family.

She has a background in case management in the mental health field. Her education includes a Bachelors of Science in Psychology and she is currently working on a Master's in Public Administration. She is passionate about mental health and realizes that housing is a key component in recovery and stabilization.

As someone who has worked with the system and manages a Bipolar II diagnosis, she has seen first-hand how fragmented the mental health system is. She wants to help others through this system and find a stable home where they can start or continue their recovery.

Being new to the association, she will be finishing some of the projects Rachel has planned and will then focus on education and advocacy for home operators. She welcomes input and ideas to better and move this association forward.

You can contact her at emylynn@namiohio.org or call the office at (614) 224-2700.



Ohio Adult Care Facilities Association
P.O. Box 133
West Jefferson, OH 43162

HOW TO BECOME AN OACFA MEMBER

As a member of the Ohio Adult Care Facilities Association, you will be at the forefront of ACF news and funding opportunities. Members of the Ohio Adult Care Facilities Association are seen as active participants in efforts to assure quality care, increase occupancy, and obtain resources to meet the needs of your residents. **By forming a collective voice for adult care facilities in Ohio, we can accomplish more than if we work alone.**

Upon receipt of your yearly \$100 dues, you will receive a plaque to display in your home indicating you are a member of our association. Each year thereafter, you will receive a year plate that shows your continuing membership.

To become a member of OACFA, please go to <http://www.ohioadultcarefacilitiesassociation.org/join> to access the membership application and return a completed copy to the address on the form. If you have any questions, please contact Retta at **(614) 800-7863**.

We look forward to your home becoming a member of our organization. Together, we can work to meet the expanding needs of adult care facilities in Ohio and improve residents' lives.



If you would like to become a member, feel free to contact OACFA at 614-800-7863