



LeadingAge Presentation at Emerald Heights CCRC

Residents at Emerald Heights attended a presentation by LeadingAge on February 5, 2024. LeadingAge Washington's President Deb Murphy and Vice President of Public Policy Alyssa Odegaard were the presenters at the meeting. Grant Linacre also attended as he is both the Executive Director at Emerald Heights and the Chair of the LeadingAge Board of Directors.

The LeadingAge WA website says "LeadingAge Washington represents the interests of not-for-profit and mission-driven organizations dedicated to improving the aging experience of over 50,000 older Washingtonians and their family members, whether in need of safe and affordable housing or healthcare offered in both community and licensed residential settings. On behalf of our member organizations, we advocate for needed funding to support caring and housing for low-income seniors and we advocate for sound policy that promotes a healthy and balanced care environment always with a constant eye towards quality improvement."

It was clear from the presentation that LeadingAge is primarily focused on assisted living and skilled nursing and increasing reimbursements from Medicare and Medicaid for service providers in both areas. The LeadingAge contributions to CCRC independent living residents are limited to providing fee-based educational programs for CCRC staff and hosting a monthly forum for CCRC executives to discuss ideas and issues.

After their presentation, LeadingAge entertained questions. Resident comments solicited after the meeting highlighted a couple surprises. For example, residents were surprised at how little of the program dealt with issues related to Independent Living (IL) residents. Moreover, the presenters admitted knowing little about the issues that were of concern to IL residents. One resident asked if they were familiar with the results of the resident survey Emerald Heights had recently been completed with a 97% response rate. After a "no" answer, the resident suggested they review the Halloran surveys and become more familiar with the concerns of IL residents.

Another resident stated his concerns about the timely refunding of entrance fees. Deb Murphy seemed to indicate that in some cases, those refunds could put a strain on the CCRC community as they would result in higher monthly fees to residents. Since there is no trust account for fees that need to be reimbursed, and since they are used for other programs, it is possible that funds would not be available for refunds without raising service fees for all residents.

On a positive note, LeadingAge's presentation seemed to be in favor of Resident Rights. Residents were, however, concerned because the presenters would not express what rights they would support. They stated they needed "clarity." Another example was the desire by LeadingAge for "fair, reasonable, and cost-effective laws," but no specificity was given as to what that means to them.

Some questions to consider asking of LeadingAge officials if they come to your CCRC might include:

- How has LeadingAge supported residents in other states where CCRCs have failed?
- Does LeadingAge have "best practices" for Independent Living that they share with CCRC executives, and, if so, what are those practices?
- What Resident Rights do they support?

If you attend a LeadingAge meeting at your CCRC, please feel free to share your thoughts with us at info@WACCRA.org

OR

with your CCRC's Membership Liaison:

Emerald Heights – Donna Kristaponis

Hearthstone – Bob Hunter

Horizon House – Barbara Knight

Mirabella – Mandy Wertz

Parkshore – Jerry Tuttle

Skyline – Tom Sakata

Timber Ridge – Celie Brown

Other CCRCs – Susan Dillon, Membership Chair susan@chezdillon.com