



Alliance for the Betterment of
Citizens with Disabilities

Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

Sufficient Staff Embedded in a Culture of Care
Cameras in Group Homes
Updated May 2024

The newest rendition of the bill which requires group homes to install electronic monitoring devices in common areas, upon request and with uniform residential consent pertains only to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are assessed as “Tier C and Beyond.”¹ Specifically, the proposal is applicable only to individuals who are categorized as C, D, E and F tiers, assessed to have higher medical, behavioral or self-care support needs, than individuals who are categorized as A and B tiers.

Despite this well-intended qualification, the bill continues to be an ethically fraught response to assuaging concerns about abuse.

The bill implies that while living in licensed group homes individuals who are “Tier C and Beyond” are more vulnerable to abuse than individuals who are in tiers A and B. If this is driven by assumption rather than data, please consider that one can just as easily posit that “Tier C and Beyond” may be less likely subjects of abuse in DDD licensed residential settings because they have more eyes-on care. Incidentally, considering the risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation it may be ill-advised to parse this historically disempowered group of individuals.

Because “Tier C and Beyond” receive more assistance, the provider has a heightened responsibility to ensure these individuals’ rights to privacy, dignity and respect are not diminished because of their level of need. Since there is no evidence that the use of cameras in congregate settings reliably protects individuals from abuse and neglect, enacting the proposed policy could risk adding unnecessary burdens and roadblocks to the three aforementioned fundamental responsibilities of the provider.

CMS has begun to better clarify its position on surveillance through its responses to states’ requests to provide remote support. CMS policies repeatedly demand that the process must ensure that surveillance will help the individual to achieve their person-centered service plan goals while consequentially not impeding the plan goals of others living in the same communal setting. Unlike the group-centric process of unanimous consent outlined in the bill, CMS requires the approval process be individual centric.

While cameras may offer the family comfort, they are not the answer to preventing abuse or a proxy for accountability. Our focus must remain on the real remedy, sufficient staff embedded in a culture of care.

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¹ Senate., No. 3173 Introduced on May 9, 2024