FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT ARE THE MINNESOTA LONG TERM CARE FACILITY RESIDENT AND FAMILY QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEYS?
The Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Department of Health require performance measurement and public reporting for all Minnesota-certified nursing facilities. A standardized survey and interview procedure will be administered to measure resident satisfaction and quality of life at each facility. Current long term residents will participate in face-to-face interviews conducted by trained and supervised interviewers. The primary representative for each current resident will receive the corresponding family quality of life survey in the mail.

WHO IS FUNDING THIS PROJECT?
The Minnesota Department of Human Services is funding the Minnesota Long Term Care Facility Resident and Family Quality of Life Survey project.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE LONG TERM CARE FACILITY QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY?
The purpose of the survey is:

1) To increase long term care facility awareness of resident and family perspectives of their services;
2) To aid long term care facilities in making quality improvement plans; and
3) To provide an online public report that will help people who are looking for a long term care facility understand how the people who live there feel about it. The report card is available to the public at: http://www.health.state.mn.us/nhreportcard. The report card will include results from both the resident and family surveys.

WHICH RESIDENTS WILL BE INTERVIEWED?
With proportional random sampling, the number of interviews to complete varies based on the number of long term residents at each facility. Facilities submit a resident census list to Vital Research two weeks before the scheduled interview dates. Vital Research will determine the number of interviews needed at each facility based on the number of long term residents on this list. Vital Research randomly selects the list of long term residents to be interviewed.
Each facility also provides the list of all residents in isolation or whose primary responsibly party has declined participation on his/her behalf on the first day of scheduled interviews. Interviewers remove these residents from their lists of eligible residents to interview.

**WHO RECEIVES A FAMILY SURVEY?**
Facilities are responsible for identifying one primary representative for each current long term resident at their facility. Contact information for each representative will be in the resident/family census list submitted to Vital Research. Every primary representative will receive a mailed survey, allowing all families an opportunity to complete the survey on paper or online. Approximately three weeks after the survey has been mailed, the primary representative will receive a reminder postcard in the mail to encourage participation. Vital Research monitors the number of returned surveys needed to meet the margin of error for each facility. If the number of returned surveys does not meet the margin of error, Vital Research will conduct phone interviews with representatives whose surveys were not received.

**HOW ARE INTERVIEWERS TRAINED?**
Interviewers complete a comprehensive training that includes classroom instruction and practical experience conducting supervised interviews of residents. Interviewers learn how to administer a structured interview the same way to each resident. They are taught to approach each resident with a positive attitude, believing that he/she will be able to provide opinions about his/her experience at the facility. If a resident offers no response, or gives answers that are not responsive to the stated question to four questions in a row, the interview is discontinued and the resident is thanked for his/her time. If a resident becomes tired during an interview, the interviewer may return later in the day to complete the interview.

Interviewer training stresses that interviewers are not conducting an observation study and their own personal views about a long term care facility are of no importance. Interviewers have a unique role, serving as the voice to hear and record the opinions of the residents who reside in the facilities. Experienced Quality Assurance Monitors visit different interviewers each day in facilities across the state, conducting quality assurance activities and providing reinforcement and corrective feedback to interviewers.

**CAN WE GET A COPY OF THE RESULTS?**
The Department of Human Services will provide facilities with individual results compared with statewide data. The results of the resident and family surveys will be converted to a five-star rating. The rating will be available, among other quality measures, to the public online in the Nursing Home Report Card at [http://www.health.state.mn.us/nhreportcard/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/nhreportcard/).

**ARE RESIDENT INTERVIEWS CONFIDENTIAL?**
Yes. All surveys are recorded on a handheld mobile device and submitted directly to an independent research organization, Vital Research. The survey uses identification numbers assigned by Vital Research to keep answers confidential. Only a summary of the results will be reported.
**HOW LONG DOES THE INTERVIEW TAKE?**
The interview is brief and takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

**WHY ARE RESIDENTS WITH DEMENTIA BEING INTERVIEWED?**
Inclusion of residents with dementia strengthens the reliability of the results, and it is ethical to try to include all residents’ perspectives. The frailty of long term care facility residents makes them expensive to interview, and their varying levels of dementia have led some to believe that they cannot speak for themselves. Research groups worked in the 1990s to develop reliable and valid resident satisfaction tools to capture perceptions of long term care facility residents, including those with dementia.

The surveys being used for this statewide project have been designed and field-tested for use with this population. The interviewer training program, which includes methods proven to achieve a high response rate, is based on Vital Research conducting over 300,000 resident interviews. The interviewers are trained in how to interview residents who are cognitively impaired or who are hearing impaired. They are trained in strategies for handling challenging situations and when to discontinue an interview if a resident is non-responsive.

**WHY NOT LET STAFF OR FAMILIES GUIDE THE INTERVIEWER TO RESIDENTS WHO CAN BE INTERVIEWED?**
Interviewers use questions and techniques that are specially designed to elicit answers from residents with impairments. People who appear unresponsive or uncooperative to family members or staff may very well be able to participate in an interview. Allowing an independent third party (Vital Research) to randomly sample residents also reduces the potential for bias.

**WHY NOT LET THE STAFF AND FAMILIES ANSWER FOR RESIDENTS?**
Many studies have shown that staff and families provide different answers from one another and different answers from residents. Each group’s opinions are important, but they cannot substitute for one another.

**WHAT ABOUT THE ACCURACY OF THE OPINIONS OF RESIDENTS WITH DEMENTIA?**
Any consumer quality of life or satisfaction survey reflects customer opinions. Each person’s response reflects their perspective.

In resident quality of life surveys, we are interested in every resident’s perspective, because only then will we have a complete understanding of quality of life in long term care facilities.