

Q “I’ve heard about these quality assurance dollars and I wonder how they will be used in the facility where I work. Can you help?”

A The “quality assurance dollars” you refer to are a result of the passage of a law (Senate File 476) by the Iowa Legislature in 2009. The law created an additional fee on all for-profit and nonprofit nursing facilities in Iowa. The idea was that money raised by the fee would be used to obtain additional money from the federal government. The law directed that no less than 35% of this new money be used to increase compensation and costs of employment for direct care workers.

The ICA worked hard on this legislation. With the support of organizations like AARP in Iowa, we were successful in getting the “no less than 35%” language in the bill. That language was the key in ensuring that direct care worker compensation issues would be addressed. This bill was part of ICA’s policy agenda to improve the ability of facilities to recruit and keep the very best workers...that would lead to the very best quality of care for those they serve.

To be clear: this is a complicated subject and it’s easy to get confused about the details. Facilities are getting different amounts of money, depending on their size and their percentage of private pay residents. They will spend it at different times in different ways. Our hope is that facility management and staff will have opportunities to communicate to you about the dollars being received and the options on how to use them.

Facilities do have options on how to use the money for direct care workers. They could pay bonuses or increase hourly wages. They could pay for training. They could improve benefits. They could hire more direct care staff. Direct care staff in facilities across Iowa will soon be seeing the results of these initial decisions. All facilities that get these dollars must report on how they were used.

The first reports will soon be flowing to the Iowa Department of Human Services and we’ll have a better idea of how direct care workers will be impacted.



by **John Hale**, ICA Public Policy Consultant