

HEALTH FACILITIES DIVISION

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South, Bldg A-2
Denver, Colorado 80246

HFD 7900



A Resident's Guide to

**PROTECTING PERSONAL
PROPERTY IN A COLORADO
NURSING HOME OR
ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY**

**A Pro-active Approach to
Preventing Theft & Loss**



Mission Statement

We are responsible for establishing and enforcing standards for the operation of health care facilities. Through education, inspection, investigation and enforcement, we assure that the public receives care from providers that promotes their health and enhances the quality of their lives, their dignity and their autonomy. 🍷



PEOPLE CARING FOR PEOPLE
HEALTH FACILITIES DIVISION
Colorado Department of
Public Health and Environment
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South
Denver, Colorado 80246
Denver Number: 303-692-2800
Toll-Free Number: 1-800-886-7689
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Grand Junction: 970-248-7159
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Moving to a Nursing Home or Assisted Living Facility

If you are going to move to a nursing home or assisted living facility, (even on a temporary basis), it is only natural for you to want to take some of the things you cherish along with you. You may want things that remind you of the people you love, or items that will make your new home more comfortable and familiar. Because others will be “sharing” your new home, it becomes necessary to take steps to protect your personal belongings. There are several things you can do.

Acknowledge the Possibility

It is important to acknowledge the possibility that your possessions may be lost or stolen. Realizing and thinking about this possibility in advance allows you to make pro-active decisions to protect your valuables.

Making the Decision

Check with your homeowner’s insurance to see if coverage can be extended to the new facility. This may impact your decision to take an item with you.

See if you can purchase special insurance on therapeutic devices such as hearing aids, dentures, eyeglasses, etc.

Check with the nursing home or assisted living facility, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Health Facilities Division, the local ombudsman, or the local police department to see if there is a history of security problems at the facility.

Are any of the items irreplaceable or one of a kind? If so, it would be a good idea to have reproductions of the items made and to leave the originals in a safe place. This includes photographs, jewelry, artwork, etc.

Once the Decision is Made

Make a list of all of the personal belongings you will be taking with you. Give a copy of the list to the facility, and one to a family member, friend or attorney. Remember to update the lists when you receive a gift or when you discard or send an item home with a friend or relative.

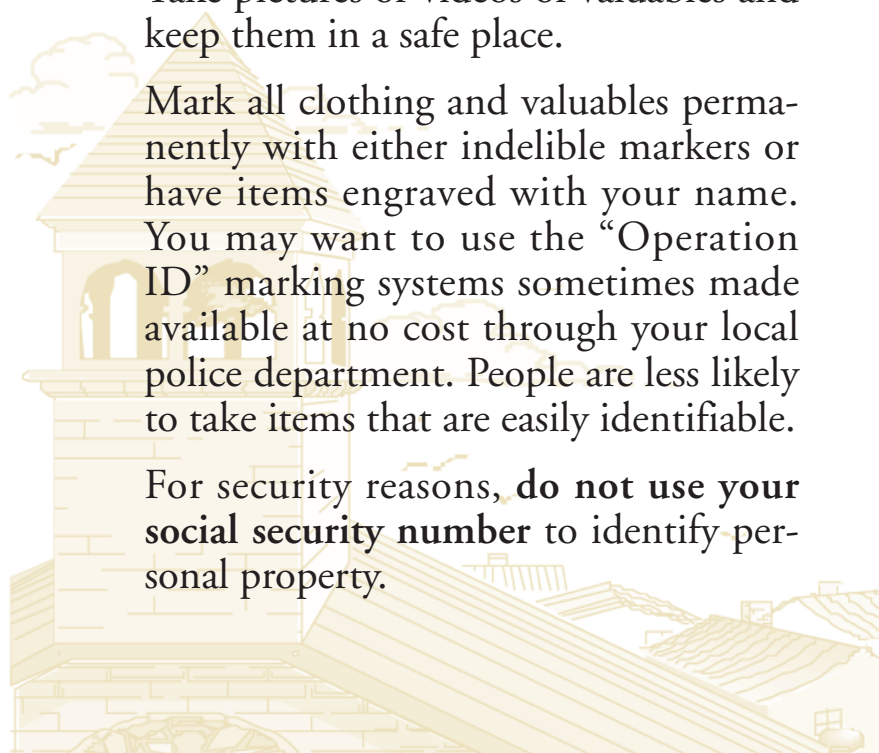
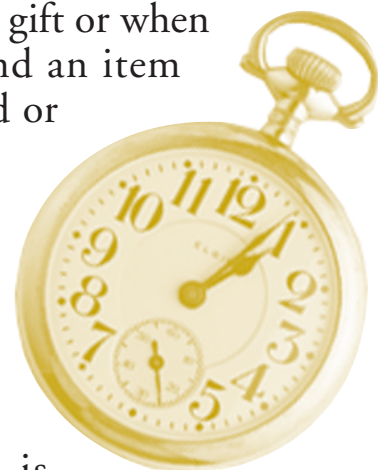
Keep receipts. This may help you recover the value of an item if lost or stolen.

A picture really is worth a thousand words.

Take pictures or videos of valuables and keep them in a safe place.

Mark all clothing and valuables permanently with either indelible markers or have items engraved with your name. You may want to use the “Operation ID” marking systems sometimes made available at no cost through your local police department. People are less likely to take items that are easily identifiable.

For security reasons, **do not use your social security number** to identify personal property.



Remember to mark dentures (most dentists will mark them for you) and eyeglasses as well. It may sound funny, but you never know when you might accidentally misplace one or the other. It is a good idea to have small containers, convenient both to you and to the staff, to hold dentures, eyeglasses, hearing aids, etc. when not in use.

At the Facility

Ask about secured storage for personal belongings. Check to see if the home allows you to keep money and small items locked in its office or safe.

Report (preferably in writing) any missing item to the facility as soon as possible. Provide detailed descriptions, pictures, when and where the item was last seen and its value (include a copy of the receipt, if you still have it). Ask them to investigate the loss and to file a police report if you believe the item was stolen. It is considered a felony if money or items stolen are valued over \$100.

If loss/theft seems to be an ongoing problem in the facility and it does not appear an effective program is in place, ask the Resident and/or Family Council or the facility's administration to help develop and recommend a loss/theft policy to the facility.

If a theft or loss should occur, ask for help dealing with the loss, memories, and feelings connected with the stolen or lost items. After all, you wouldn't have brought the items with you if they weren't important to you.



What are Your Rights?

- ☺ If the nursing facility accepts Medicare and Medicaid payments, federal law gives you the right to keep and use personal possessions, including some furnishings and appropriate clothing, with some restrictions. A nursing home can only restrict this right if it interferes with the rights or health and safety of other residents.
- ☺ If you live in an assisted living facility, the regulations require the facility to establish house rules that include the protection of your valuables while on the premises.
- ☺ A facility can be held responsible for the loss or theft of personal property if it fails to maintain a reasonably safe and secure environment.
- ☺ You have the right to ask the facility to file a police report if you believe the item was stolen. If they refuse, you, a family member, or guardian may file a report.
- ☺ Request reimbursement if the property cannot be recovered. Request a written response within a reasonable time period. Facilities must respond promptly to complaints. If you are unable to resolve your complaint against the facility, Colorado allows you to sue to recover the value of the property in small claims court.



- ⊕ Do not let any waiver of liability you may have signed upon entering the facility keep you from exercising your rights. Such agreements may not be legally enforceable.
- ⊕ You have the right to manage your own financial affairs. The facility may not require you to deposit your personal funds with the facility.
- ⊕ You may file a complaint with the Health Facilities Division concerning abuse, neglect, or misappropriation of your property in the facility.



Need Some Help?

If you need assistance, contact the ombudsman in the area where your facility is located. Every nursing home has an independent ombudsman assigned to it. Ombudsmen are people who are trained to advocate/problem-solve for residents and their families. They can help resolve problems, answer your questions about facility services and standards, and your rights as a resident. There is no charge for these services. The names and phone numbers of your ombudsmen should be posted at the facility. If you are not sure who your local ombudsman is, call the State Ombudsman at 303-722-0300 or 1-800-288-1376 (toll free).



You may file a formal complaint with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Health Facilities Division, by calling:

303-692-2800

A complaint can also be filed in person, by FAX, or in writing to:

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HEALTH FACILITIES DIVISION—A2
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South
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1-800-886-7689
FAX: 303-782-4883
(Grand Junction Office
1-970-248-7159)

When filing a complaint, be sure to include as many details as possible.