
***Delaware Nursing Home Residents
Quality Assurance Commission***

DNHRQAC Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2025

9:30 a.m.

Virtually via Cisco Webex

Anchor Location: DE CLASI – Georgetown

20151 Office Circle

Georgetown, DE 19947

FINAL

Commission member(s) present: Lisa Furber, DNHRQAC Chair; Cheryl Heiks; Norma Jones; Mary Peterson; Kori Bingaman, RN, NHA; Chris Marques, Esquire; Brandon Williams, proxy for Senator Mantzavinos; Representative Claire Snyder-Hall; Dr. Avani Virani.

Commission member(s) not in attendance: Brian Frazee and Hooshang Shanehsaz, RPH.

Delaware Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Patrick Smith, Esquire, was in attendance.

Ms. Furber attended in-person at the anchor location. The remainder of meeting participants attended virtually or by phone. A quorum of commission members was present.

Others Present: Margaret Bailey, DNHRQAC; Susan Moore, DNHRQAC; Paul Smiley, Gilpin Hall; James McCracken, LeadingAge DE/NJ; Sean Dwyer, Alzheimer's Assoc., Delaware Valley Chapter; Amanda Levering, DHCQ; Denise Elliott, DHCQ; Rob Smith, DHCQ; Kevin Andrews, Public; Kim Reed, DHCQ; Khazra Fatima, Legislative Aide, Delaware House of Representatives, Alexia Wolf, Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill, (DHCI), Helana Rodrigues, Project Comfort.

1. Call to Order and Introductions

- Commission Chair, Lisa Furber, called the meeting to order at, 9:34 a.m.
- Members and staff provided introductions to include two (2) newly appointed members and one (1) new staff member.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- A motion by Commissioner Peterson was made and seconded by Dr. Avani Virani to approve the minutes of October 21, 2025. The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Approval of Annual Report

- The FY25 Annual Report was discussed, and changes were suggested.
 - Commissioner Marques suggested spelling, font, and format revisions creating consistency within the document.
 - No substantive changes were noted.
- A motion was made by Commissioner Peterson to approve the FY25 Annual Report as amended with document format revisions.
- A poll vote was taken by Chairwoman Furber, and the motion carried unanimously - 9 yeas.

4. Approval of Revised Bylaws

- Due to SB 155, SS2, changes to DNHRQAC's membership, duties, and responsibilities prompted a DNHRQAC bylaw revision.
 - Changes the Commission's name to the, Delaware Residents' Protection Commission, (DRPC).
 - Increases membership from 13 to 15 members.
 - Defines and updates the Commission's purpose.
 - Provides for grant application submission.
 - Authorizes the Commission's Executive Director to speak on behalf of the Commission.
- Commissioner Heiks inquired about Subcommittees and their ability to speak on behalf of the full Commission without a full Commission discussion. No language is present in the bylaws related to Subcommittees.
- Commissioner Marques requested that under, Article VII, *Parliamentary Authority*, that the information contain a specific reference for, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition*. Commissioner Snyder-Hall suggested the following language: Latest Edition of Robert's Rules of Order.
- Commissioner Peterson made a motion to adopt the revised bylaws as written including the Robert's Rule edition update, however, also allow time for additional revision to be suggested and discussed at a later time.
- A poll vote was taken by Chairwoman Furber, and the motion carried unanimously - 9 yeas.
- Chairwoman Furber opened the consideration of developing a group of Commissioners to work on the bylaw revisions. Commissioners Heiks, Peterson, Virani and Marques agreed to assist.

5. Approval of Draft Legislation – Memory Care

- A Legislative and Advocacy Subcommittee has prioritized suggested revisions to Title 16, Chapter 11, Subchapter X, of the Delaware Code - Dementia Care Services, (Memory Care). Commissioner Peterson has initiated revision considerations for the Commission to review and provide suggested language to the legislation. Once the Commission has completed its draft legislation, the next step will be to gather legislator support and sponsorship.
- A motion was made by Dr. Virani to approve Commissioner Peterson's suggestion to share the Memory Care draft with legislators and stakeholders. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jones.
- A poll vote was taken by Chairwoman Furber, and the motion carried - 7 yeas, 2 abstained.
- Stakeholder feedback should be submitted to the Commission no later than January 1, 2026, for full commission review.
- Chairwoman Furber recommended the draft contain a watermark when circulated.

6. Approval of Feedback Relating to DHSS Draft Regulations for HB 140, Medical Aid in Dying

- Executive Director Bailey provided an overview and update of the draft regulations. The Legislative and Advocacy Committee members had an opportunity to engage in questions and provided a list of initial ideas to the DHSS group. The regulations are scheduled for publication in December 2025, or January 2026, edition of the Delaware Register of Regulations.

- Commissioner Heiks stated that she participated on the Delaware Medical Orders for Scope of Treatment (DMOST) taskforce and shared industry concerns regarding HB 140, and requested the regulations include language regarding physicians and facilities who do not want to participate. She further stated this could pose a problem for individuals who want to participate in this end-of-life option, and as written, may require individuals to exit the facility if they choose to make use of this Act.
- Dr. Virani added that some physicians are not comfortable with the process and asked if DNHRQAC Commission members were planning a separate discussion with Claire Cepuran, Manager of Clinical Advocacy, Compassion and Choices, due to additional question like when implementation will occur, and other questions related to specifics that the regulations do not address.
- Commissioner Marques asked if it would be possible to obtain a copy of the DHSS slide presentation related to the proposed regulations and added that the Commission will be better prepared to comment once the regulations are available for review. Commissioner Heiks added that major changes to regulations, after they have been published, is challenging, however, minor changes may be possible.
- Commissioner Peterson made a motion to invite Claire Cepuran to an upcoming meeting to address the draft regulations and respond to questions, giving the Commission time to determine their position and provide suggestions.
- A poll vote was taken by Chairwoman Furber, and the motion carried - 8 yeas, 1 abstained.

7. Old/New Business

- DNHRQAC Satisfaction Survey
 - Executive Director Bailey indicated that the Satisfaction Survey was piloted at Cadia Broadmeadow. Additionally, facilities were provided 3 educational opportunities to learn more about satisfaction survey which focuses on quality of care and safety. The survey is available for residents, caregivers/family members, and facility staff.
 - Chairwoman Furber stated that the survey completion date is expected for early next year.
 - Commissioner Peterson shared a concern regarding the completion date as she believed it would be completed in 2025.
 - Chairwoman Furber stated that the Commission is still working through matters that have interrupted the survey process, and it is anticipated that the matters will be resolved soon.
 - Commissioner Peterson asked what the Commission can do to expedite the process.
 - Commissioner Heiks stated that the survey idea did not go before the entire commission and stakeholders were not involved in the development of the survey initiative. Additionally, she will work to collaborate with stakeholders to help move the survey forward.
 - Chairwoman Furber stated that she believed since this is a quality of care and safety survey, there are times where stakeholder collaboration is helpful and other times projects are a commission initiative, which does not require stakeholder considerations.

- Patrick Smith, DAG, added that he supports the Commission moving forward with the survey.
- Commissioner Peterson agreed in-part with Commissioner Heiks comments and stated that this is not a survey that will identify specific facility issues, but holistically, it will determine where systematic facility changes should be discussed and considered.
- Commissioner Jones added that, as a resident, she is interested in viewing the results and how the results will impact residential care.
- Commissioner Peterson made a motion to move forward with administering the survey, to understand universal issues, and to understand universal positive outcomes that are shared among the stakeholders.
- Commissioner Heiks stated that she has not viewed the questions on the survey and was not comfortable voting on the motion before reviewing the survey questions.
- Executive Director stated that there is a QR Code available for everyone to review the survey questions.
- Commissioner Marques stated that he does not believe the Commission is blocking the project, and the Commission is doing all within its power to move the project forward.
- Chairwoman Furber shared her frustration with the project being delayed due to significant barriers such as the discussion that occurred in October regarding who would be completing the survey, are background checks a reasonable requirement, and can the survey be conducted on a one-on-one basis? Follow up was provided and does not believe that the issues raised have been settled.
- Commissioner Peterson stated the background check matter is addressed in the code where facility employees, contract employees, and volunteers, are required to have background checks, however, there is no background requirements regarding visitors of a facility or Commission Members and adult daycare workers. The University of Delaware volunteers, who are set to assist, have had background checks completed.
- Commissioner Jones added that HIPPA restricts her accommodation of a resident/friend even though she is a member of the Commission.
- Commissioner Peterson agreed that HIPPA is important and serves as a protection, but no HIPPA information is being requested with the survey.
- Commissioner Peterson added that since the background checks are an issue with moving forward, should she contact her representative and senator about a matter that is not a statutory requirement.
- DAG Smith stated that there is no legal issue hindering the project and the Commission should move forward.
- Commissioner Heiks has asked for a meeting with Executive Director Bailey and believes additional insight will help with communicating the project to other stakeholders, and caution must be used with safeguarding the residents and volunteers.
- Executive Director Bailey received confirmation from the Commission to move forward with the satisfaction survey project.
- Commissioner Peterson asked that the project be completed within the next month.
- Commissioner Bingaman elaborated on the background check policies by stating, there are reasonable restrictions where facilities can impose on those restriction to ensure safety and privacy but not infringe on their rights. The initial concern was that the people administering the survey were not clearly identified between university students or members of the Commission. Defining this matter will be helpful with moving forward. Commissioner

Marques agreed and suggested the Commission move forward using its members.

- Chairwoman Furber requested a copy of the minutes that contained the Commission's vote regarding who will conduct the surveys.
- DNHRQAC Committee Updates
 - Chairwoman Furber provided updates.
 - The Legislative and Advocacy Subcommittee has discussed HB 140 and Memory Care legislation.
 - The Hiring Subcommittee moved forward with hiring an Administrative Specialist.
 - The Eagles Law Subcommittee has not received applications for staffing ratio waivers, and weekly meetings will continue to be scheduled if in the event a waiver application is received.
 - Executive Director Bailey provided an update from the DNHRQAC's FY 27 budget hearing presentation, held on November 14, 2025, before by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

8. Discussion

- Project Comfort, Helana Rodriguez
 - Project Comfort, Inc., mission's is to bring comfort, care, and connection to those who need it most, with a focus on seniors in nursing homes who often face profound isolation. We believe that comfort is #morethanablanket, it's about connection, providing emotional support, dignity, belonging, and igniting hope in the hearts of those we serve.
 - Project Comfort, Inc. was founded in 2017, by Helana Rodriguez in loving memory of her grandmother. Helana was visiting her grandmother in a nursing home and saw areas of isolation among the residents. Soon after, she was inspired to make a change bringing hope, comfort, love and caring to those who experience isolation and may not have someone to visit them in the nursing home.
 - Each year, Project Comfort partners with organizations and friends to visit local nursing homes and deliver cozy blankets and spend time with the residents. What started nearly seven years ago with just Helana and her husband delivering 30 blankets on Christmas morning has doubled in size every year. In 2023, Project Comfort, Inc. provided gifts and visitors to over 2,500 nursing home residents, mobilizing hundreds of volunteers across four states.
 - With its newly achieved 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, Project Comfort is excited to continue expanding its mission, bringing comfort and care to even more seniors in need.
 - Last year, Project Comfort reached 21 nursing homes across Delaware and Maryland.
 - Project Comfort, Inc. has worked with Margaret Bailey, DNHRQAC, in identifying nursing homes where a need will be met through this initiative.

- This year, seventeen (17) nursing homes are scheduled for a visit, which supplies a Christmas card, a cozy blanket, and a person to spend some time with the residents. Currently, Project Comfort, Inc., is seeking blanket donations, monetary support, and volunteers to help meet this year's goal.
- Currently, Project Comfort is optimistic in growing its partnerships with corporate sponsors, along with small and large individual donations. Additional information and donation links can be found at: www.projectcomfortinc.org.
- Ms. Bailey will circle the Project Comfort sign-up genius link to the full Commission, for those interested in volunteering for this cause.
- Commissioner Marques commented about the excellent work Ms. Rodriguez has done with the initiative and inquired as to the general overview of a volunteer assignment. Ms. Rodriguez explained that the nursing homes may have a point of contact to assist with resident visit coordination as well as a Project Comfort, Inc volunteer lead.
- Commissioner Bingaman asked the amount needed to complete this year's objective of serving 1,700 nursing home residents. The amount needed is approximately \$3000.00.
- A question was asked about how a nursing home can register to have Project Comfort visit its residents. Ms. Rodriguez explained that the best way is by reaching out to her directly: projectcomfortinc@gmail.com.
- November 29, 2025, is the deadline for blanket donations.
- Delaware Health Care Commission Retreat, Susan Moore
 - The retreat focused on the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP), which is a significant U.S. federal initiative, administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and part of H.R 1. The program provides \$50 billion in approved funding over five fiscal years to improve healthcare access, quality, and outcomes in rural American communities. DHCC speakers included: Chairman Dr. Neil Hockstein, Dr. Kathy Matt, Dr. John Powell, Nick Moriello, and Cheri Clarke-Doyle.
 - Delaware's plan for improving rural health focuses on expanding access, building the workforce, and improving care quality through initiatives such as a new medical school, deploying mobile health units, expanding school-based clinics, and supporting telehealth and remote monitoring.
 - Key objectives of the program aim to transform rural healthcare by addressing five strategic goals: **Preventative Care** - Delaware's plan includes a Food as Medicine Program, A Rural Diabetes Wellness Pilot Program, School-Based Health Centers, Mobile Health Units, integrated "Hope Centers", in Kent and Sussex counties, and Expanded Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Services. **Sustainable Access** - Key strategies for Delaware include expanding mobile health units and integrated care hubs, strengthening the medical workforce, upgrading IT infrastructure,

and implementing innovative care models like value-based care. **Workforce Development** - Delaware's plan is to establish its first four-year medical school, offering financial incentives, building a data center, expanding clinical training opportunities, developing an Office of Healthcare Provider Resources to help recruit professionals, and Leveraging technology.

Innovative Care Models –Delaware will Deploy Technology-Enabled Solutions through data and technology, Expanding Community Health Hubs and Services, Implementing Value-Based Care Models, and Leveraging Mid-Level Professionals to expand their scope of practice through licensure reforms. And **Technology Innovation**. Delaware's plan focuses on expanding telehealth and remote monitoring, infrastructure upgrades, enhancing cybersecurity, and upgrading data systems to improve coordination across the state.

- Commissioner Bingaman inquired on whether the Delaware Health Care Commission is overseen by the Delaware Resource Board, and is it the same entity? Executive Director Bailey will follow up with additional information.

9. Public Comment

- Mr. Paul Smiley, Gilpin Hall, requested that the Commission share the draft Memory Care legislation, and Chairwoman Furber responded affirmatively.
- Executive Director Bailey reminded the Commission that the next Legislative and Advocacy Meeting is scheduled for November 21, 2025, 10:00 a.m.

10. Next DNHRQAC Full Meeting

- Tuesday, December 16, 2025, 9:30 a.m.

11. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 am.

Attachments: DNHRQAC Meeting of 11/18/2025 – Meeting Agenda
DNHRQAC Meeting Minutes Draft – 10/21/2025
FY25 DNHRQAC Annual Report & Charts
Assisted Living Facility Statute – Memory Care Draft
DRPC Bylaw Draft
Proxy Form
DHCC Retreat PowerPoint Presentation