
I NTRODUCTION

This is a story of innovation. This monograph describes how Alexian Village of Milwaukee, a Continuing Care Retirement Community, sought to improve the quality of its Health Center residents' life by manipulating the physical environment. In 1991 Alexian built a new health center which reinterpreted the traditional codes of nursing homes in the state of Wisconsin. During the planning, designing, and approval process, Alexian looked for alternative solutions to improve traditional standards. The physical environment of the new facility was used as a therapeutic tool. Because of these innovations, it took nearly two years to get the project approved by the state. It is hoped the process of creating this facility will provide other care-providers with helpful information on the rewards of innovation.

The purpose of this monograph is to tell the process of creating an innovative facility for older persons. By telling Alexian's story, this monograph will attempt to achieve four major goals. The first goal is to communicate that an institutional setting for older persons is a complex interaction of three dimensions. These dimensions include organizational influences, individuals who inhabit the setting and the physical

environment. These three factors work together to create the 'personality' of a setting. *Organizational* influences include the philosophy of care, policies, and goals of the setting. *Individual* characteristics include different physical and cognitive competencies as well as personal backgrounds. The *physical environment* should be considered last since it should support the organizational influences, individuals, and the social atmosphere of the setting.

The second goal of this monograph is to demonstrate the role of the physical environment as a therapeutic tool. The Therapeutic Model of Care for nursing homes focuses on allowing an individual to be successful or having a sense of being accepted or valued. This Model of Care should be reinforced by the physical setting. Goals of the Therapeutic model of care which related strongly to architectural design and programming include: providing a familiar residential setting, minimizing physical barriers, enhancing connections with the surrounding community, and enhancing relations with family members.

The third goal of this monograph is to show the importance of the preparatory process in creating a facility for older persons. Innovative planning, programming and a knowledge of the political arena are critical to create a better environments for older persons. In order to make informed planning decisions, one should consider site benefits and constraints, budget, the served population's profile, admission and discharge criteria, the development of a care plan, as well as staffing issues.

The fourth goal is to show how a constant process of analysis and evaluation of all three previously mentioned dimensions by a health care organization is a rewarding process. A facility which supports innovation and creativity will be more successful in improving the quality of life for its residents. Evaluation must be a continuous process.

This monograph is organized in six chapters. The first chapter highlights issues of the traditional nursing home. These issues face every organization when creating a new nursing facility. To provide a context for the new Health Care Center, the second chapter describes the entire Continuing Care Retirement Community of Alexian Village of Milwaukee. This description is organized by the three dimensions of the setting which include its organizational policies, a resident's profile, and the physical setting. The third chapter describes these same three dimensions for the New Health Center. The fourth chapter outlines the history of creating the new center and a plan analysis pointing out its innovative features. The fifth chapter evaluates the Health Care Center in terms of whether its design goals are met and compares it to the old health. The last section indicates implications for future projects.