



## FACT SHEET

SOCIAL MEDIA ABUSE IN LONG-TERM CARE:

# Join the #NameIt Campaign!

**ATTENTION!** There is a new and particularly disturbing form of elder abuse happening in the very places where many family members send their elderly loved ones for care: nursing homes and other long-term care settings. ProPublica identified **47 instances since 2012** in which workers at nursing homes and assisted living centers have shared inappropriate, dehumanizing, and unauthorized digital content of residents [Ornstein & Huseman, 2015]. This fact sheet presents the findings from this report as well as resources and ideas for action.

## WHAT WE KNOW

### Social Media Medium



Snapchat: **22 of 47 cases**



Facebook: **10 of the 47 cases**



Instagram: **6 of 47 cases**



Facetime: **1 of 47 cases**

Unspecified Social Media Medium: **8 cases**

## Employees

In **7 of 47 cases**, employees [1 case involved up to 5 employees] created and/or shared content together.



Reported job position of employees who shared content varied.

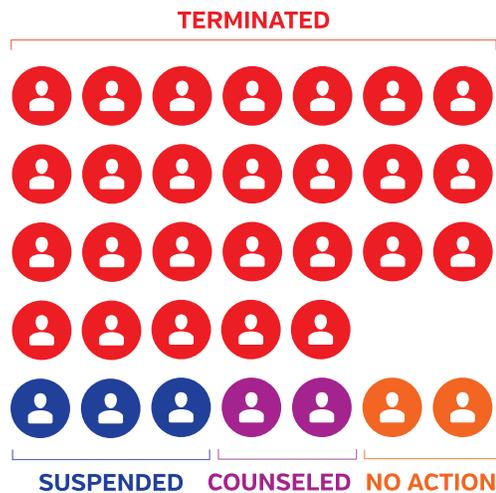
## Identified Employment Position



## ACTION TAKEN

### Reported Facility Response

Employees were terminated: **26 cases**  
Employees were suspended: **3 cases**  
Employees were counseled: **2 cases**  
No disciplinary action taken: **2 cases**



### Reported Legal Response

Employees were **criminally charged in 7 cases**:

- Charges included: invasion of privacy and conspiracy, using a computer to commit crime, elder or dependent adult abuse, taking a nude photo without consent, and voyeurism

Employees were **charged with a misdemeanor in 9 cases**:

- Charges included: willful violation of health laws, disorderly conduct and invasion of privacy through the use of surveillance device, battery, failure to report abuse, dependent adult abuse, secretly recording body of a person, unauthorized invasion of privacy, and distribution or exhibition of obscene matter

In **1 case**, a volunteer was **charged with invasion of privacy in juvenile court**.



## WHAT CAN WE DO?

Nursing home employees misusing electronic devices and social media to record elder residents in compromising positions is a growing concern. Residents often have dementia or comparable cognitive limitations and are unaware of the violation, allowing violations to happen in the first place and be highly underreported. Employees must recognize that they have an ethical and legal obligation to maintain patient privacy rights and confidentiality at all times [National Council of State Board of Nursing, 2011].

### Here are some ways facilities can protect the privacy and dignity of elders:

1. Develop and implement specific policies that address hand-held devices and social media
2. Train staff, temporary staff and volunteers, on the policy:
  - Specify that cell phones, cameras, and other devices are never to be used to record residents
  - Inform all staff that taking and distributing any digital content without resident's consent is a privacy violation
  - Discuss potential consequences of violating policies [employment consequences and or criminal penalties]

### Have you seen or suspect sharing of unauthorized content of residents in nursing home and other long-term care settings?

If you know the location where the image or video was taken, know who is in the photo/video, or know who has taken the photo/video, contact the facility directly and/or your local Long-Term Care Ombudsman to report the incident. To find an Ombudsman or other long-term care resources in your state or territory visit: [www.ltombudsman.org/get\\_help](http://www.ltombudsman.org/get_help).

## DO YOU WANT TO TAKE ACTION?

Join the **#NameIt** campaign! The Elder Justice League invites you to join the #NameIt campaign, a new social media campaign dedicated to bringing awareness to social media abuse in long-term care settings by encouraging the public to “name it” for what it is: elder abuse. Follow the hashtag #NameIt on social media for updates.

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## RESOURCES

- U.S.A.** National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care: [202] 332-2275, [theconsumervoicework.org](http://theconsumervoicework.org)  
National Center on Elder Abuse: [855] 500-3537, <https://ncea.acl.gov>  
Eldercare Locator: [800] 677-1116, [eldercare.gov](http://eldercare.gov)  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Protecting Resident Privacy and Prohibiting Mental Abuse Related to Photographs and Audio/Video Recordings by Nursing Home Staff  
<https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertificationGenInfo/Downloads/Survey-and-Cert-Letter-16-33.pdf>
- Canada** *General:* Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse: <http://cnpea.ca/en>  
*Ontario:* Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care [MOHLTC]: [866] 434-0144  
Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority [855] 275-7472  
Advocacy Centre for the Elderly [ACE]: [855] 598-2656 or 416-598-2656  
Seniors Safety Line [Counselors available 24/7 in 150 languages]: [866] 299-1011

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## REFERENCES

National Council of State Board of Nursing [NCSB]. [2011]. *A nurse's guide to use of social media and networking for nurses*. [White paper]. Retrieved from [https://www.ncsbn.org/Social\\_Media.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/Social_Media.pdf)

Ornstein, C., Huseman, J., & Propublica. [2015, December 21]. Retrieved from <https://www.propublica.org/article/inappropriate-social-media-posts-by-nursing-home-workers-detailed>