Common words or Abbreviations used in Healthcare:

Below is a list of some of the most commonly used long-term care terms with their definitions. Many of these terms are used throughout nursing centers to describe their services and care. We hope this will help you better understand the long-term health care language.

Activities of Daily Living (ADL)
ADLs are the things we normally do in a day, including any daily activity we perform for self-care (such as feeding ourselves, bathing, dressing, grooming), work, homemaking, and leisure.

Acute
A disease or symptoms of short duration but typically severe: Ex. acute appendicitis. Often contrasted with chronic.

Advance Directives
A written statement of a person’s wishes regarding medical treatment, often including a living will, made to ensure those wishes are carried out should the person be unable to communicate them to a doctor.

Assessment
The evaluation of a patient’s/resident’s care needs determined by the patient’s/resident’s physical and psychological condition and ability to perform activities of daily living.

Cardio-Pulmonary Program
This is a physician-guided program for cardiac patients that includes monitoring, exercise and treatment designed to improve the patient’s opportunity to return to a quality lifestyle. Emotional support, education, and counseling through lifestyle changes are part of the comprehensive programming.

Caregiver
A family member or paid helper who regularly looks after a child or a sick, elderly or disabled person.

Case Management
A general term referring to the facilitation of treatment plans to assure the appropriate medical care is provided to disabled, ill or injured individuals.

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)
A person who provides individuals with health care needs (often called "patient/residents", "clients", "service users") with activities of daily living (ADLs) and provides bedside care - including basic nursing procedures - all under the supervision of a Registered Nurse (RN) or Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN).

Circle of Care Meeting
This meeting includes interdisciplinary team leaders from Nursing, Rehabilitation, Dietary, Social Services, Risk Management and others. Goals are set to assist the patient/resident in reaching their optimal level of functioning with emphasis on safe discharge planning and stabilization prior to reaching their next destination.

Director of Nursing
A nurse who performs a supervisory role for the entire Nursing Department. This role represents the nursing center as one of their key leadership positions contributing to policy decisions regarding clinical practice.
Discharge Planner
Generally a Social Worker or nurse who assists the patient/resident and their families with health care arrangements following a hospital stay.

Medical Director
A person generally responsible for either the creation of protocols for treatment or providing leadership to a group of physicians who assist with the provision of medical oversight.

Home Safe Program ©
A Home Safe Program © is built around a transitional care “apartment” that offers comprehensive services for a short stay just before the patient/resident returns home. Before the patient/resident returns to their home environment, nursing and rehabilitation teams assess their abilities in the “home-like environment” to ensure they are safe to return home.

Hospitality Ambassador ©
Every patient/resident in a nursing center is assigned a Hospitality Ambassador © who is personally responsible for ensuring that each individual experiences the highest level of comfort and security attainable. The Ambassador welcomes the patient/resident upon arrival and proceeds to assist the patient/resident in receiving quality care, excellent customer service and a positive experience while living in the nursing center.

Long-Term Care
A variety of services which help meet both the medical and non-medical needs of people with a chronic illness or disability who cannot care for themselves for long periods of time.

IV/Infusion Therapies
The giving of liquid substances directly into a vein.

Length of Stay
The period or measure of time a patient/resident stays in a hospital or other health center.

Nurse Practitioner
A registered nurse who has completed specific advanced nursing education (generally a master’s degree) and training in the diagnosis and management of common as well as a few complex medical conditions. Nurse Practitioners are generally licensed through nursing boards rather than medical boards as they provide advanced nursing services. All nurse practitioners are considered “mid-level” providers similar to physician assistants (PAs). Nurse Practitioners provide a broad range of health care services.

Occupational Therapy
A form of therapy for those recuperating from physical or mental illness that encourages rehabilitation through the performance of activities required in daily life. The role of an Occupational Therapist is to work with a client to help them achieve a fulfilled and satisfied state in life through the use of purposeful activity or interventions designed to achieve functional outcomes which promote health, prevent injury or disability and which develop, improve, sustain or restore the highest possible level of independence.

Ombudsman Program
A public/government/community supported program that advocates for the rights of all patients/residents in 24-hour long-term care centers. Volunteers visit local centers weekly, monitor conditions of care and try to resolve problems involving meals, finances, medication, therapy, placement and communication with the staff.

Outpatient
A patient/resident who is not hospitalized overnight but who visits a hospital, clinic, long-term care center, or associated center for treatment or diagnosis.
Pain Management
A branch of medicine employing an interdisciplinary approach to easing the suffering and improving the quality of life for those living with pain.

Palliative Care
Any form of medical care or treatment that concentrates on reducing the severity of disease symptoms, rather than striving to halt, delay or reverse progression of the disease itself or provide a cure. The goal is to prevent and relieve suffering and to improve quality of life for people facing serious, complex illness.

Personal Care
Involves services rendered by a nurses aide, dietician or other health professional. These services include assistance in walking, getting out of bed, bathing, toilet, dressing, eating and preparing special diets.

Physical Therapy
The treatment of disease, injury or deformity by physical methods such as massage, heat treatment and exercise rather than by drugs or surgery.

Pre-Admission Screening
An assessment of a person’s functional, social, medical and nursing needs, to determine if the person should be admitted to a nursing center or other community-based care services available to eligible Medicaid recipients.

Range of Motion (ROM)
The movement of a joint to the extent possible without causing pain.

Registered Nurse
A nurse who has graduated from a college's nursing program or from a school of nursing and has passed a national licensure exam.

Respiratory Therapy
Assists patient/resident with breathing difficulties to reduce fatigue and increase tolerance in performing daily activities.

Restorative Care
To assist patient/resident in achieving optimal functioning which includes mobility, endurance, and socialization. To restore health, strength or a feeling of well-being.

Respite Care
The provision of short-term, temporary relief to those who are caring for family members who might otherwise require permanent placement in a center outside the home. Respite care provides planned short-term and time-limited breaks for families and other unpaid caregivers of children with a developmental delay and adults with an intellectual disability in order to support and maintain the primary caregiving relationship. Respite also provides a positive experience for the person receiving care.

Skilled Nursing Care
Nursing and rehabilitative care that can be performed only by, or under the supervision of, licensed and skilled medical personnel.

Skilled Nursing Center
A place of residence for people who require constant nursing care and have significant deficiencies with activities of daily living. Patients/residents include the elderly and younger adults with physical or mental disabilities. Patients/residents in a skilled nursing center may also receive physical, occupational and other rehabilitative therapies following an accident or illness.
Speech Therapy
Speech therapy helps in optimal socialization and nutrition by addressing patient/resident communication and cognitive needs, as well as swallowing dysfunctions. It helps to enhance self-esteem, pride and dignity while working with patient/resident, family and team members in restoring, compensating and/or adapting skills and environments.

Sub-Acute Care
A level of care designed for the individual who has had an acute event as a result of an illness or other medical condition, and is in need of skilled nursing or rehabilitation but does not need the intensive diagnostic or invasive procedures of a hospital.

Willow Palliative Care Program ©
A program that is intended to manage the physical, psychosocial and spiritual aspects of the dying process according to the patient's/resident's wishes while supporting and comforting their loved ones and caregivers. The goals of pain relief and control of symptoms are pursued through staff education and support.