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**Date:** May 2, 2005 BQA Memo 05-006

**To:** Community Based Residential Facilities CBRF - 03  
Facilities Serving People with Developmental Disabilities FDD - 02  
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**From:** Cris Ros-Dukler, Director  
Bureau of Quality Assurance

**National Institute on Aging Study:**  
*The Sexual Abuse of Vulnerable Adults in Institutions*

We are pleased to inform you that Wisconsin has been chosen to participate in an important multi-site national study funded by the **National Institute on Aging (NIA)**: *The Sexual Abuse of Vulnerable Adults in Institutions*.

While it is firmly believed that sexual abuse is the least observed, acknowledged, detected and reported type of elder victimization, the sexual abuse of vulnerable adults and the outcomes of state interventions have been the subject of few empirical studies. There is an insufficient knowledge base, either in the literature or among those who work with this vulnerable population, to build a best practice response and intervention protocol for instances of sexual assault occurring in facility settings.

The Bureau of Quality Assurance (BQA) has received nearly 50 reports a year from 1999-2003 of sexual assaults occurring in long term care facilities in Wisconsin. In 2000, 4,150 allegations of sexual abuse/assault were reported to Adult Protective Service (APS) systems across the nation. Studies estimate that only 3 to 25 percent of all sexual assaults are reported.

This study, conducted by nationally recognized elder mistreatment experts Pamela B. Teaster, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at the Graduate Center for Gerontology at the University of Kentucky, and Holly Ramsey-Klawnsnik, Ph.D., Sociologist and Mental Health Clinician with Klawnsnik & Klawnsnik Associates, Massachusetts, is designed to provide a better picture of the sexual abuse of vulnerable adults in institutions. Wisconsin will receive credit as a contributor to this

groundbreaking research, which, by calling attention to this problem, could assist in finding remedies, as well as funding, to address the issues identified.

The study will be carried out by BQA surveyors/ complaint investigators, BQA Office of Caregiver Quality (OCQ) investigators, Department of Justice investigators, and county Adult Protective Service/Elder Abuse workers as they perform their customary role in responding to, and investigating alleged abuse and neglect of residents or misappropriation of resident property.

The purpose of the study, which will take place between May 1, 2005, and October 31, 2005, is to better understand the characteristics of residents who become victims of sexual abuse so that they may be better protected in the future, and to improve investigatory techniques used by facility and regulatory agency staff. This study is extremely valuable and could help to prevent unnecessary suffering by residents in facilities.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, no names or other individual identifiers will ever be forwarded to the researchers at the University of Kentucky. Assigned study and case numbers will be used for tracking and matching.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions, please contact:

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On behalf of the Department, thank you for all you do on behalf of vulnerable adults in Wisconsin and your contribution to the success of this national effort.