



Editorial from the Secretary

Our role in health facility oversight

By Liz Dudek, Secretary, Agency for Health Care Administration

Many Floridians are familiar with the Agency for Health Care Administration as the entity that runs the Florida **Medicaid** program. That is true, but we also have oversight of more than 45,000 health care facilities and providers, from acute care centers like hospitals and nursing homes to companies that bring care to you like home health agencies or portable x-ray providers.

Not just anyone can get a license. There are many steps to ensure the potential operators meet the minimum standards to keep you and your loved ones safe while in their care. The requirements are specific to each type of license. Potential owners and their business partners must go through a background screening that checks for criminal convictions including if they have been involved in **Medicare** or Medicaid fraud, among other offenses. Additionally, the financial stability of the applicant is evaluated.

Prior to issuing the final license to operate, Agency surveyors go to the facility to inspect for compliance with licensing requirements. This includes checking to assure that policies and procedures for things like services and staffing, as well as the physical environment and equipment, are consistent with the license being sought.

Once a license has been issued, the Agency continues to play a role. The Agency conducts approximately 15,000 surveys annually. The frequency with which a facility is surveyed depends on many factors including the type of facility and its survey history. The Agency makes every effort to let those with a good track record operate without more intervention than statutorily necessary, and in turn concentrate our efforts on poor performers.

Agency surveyors conduct routine inspections as well complaint investigations, looking for compliance with state and federal regulations. If you suspect something isn't right at an entity we regulate, please, submit a complaint so it can be investigated. Anyone can file a complaint via our

website (www.ahca.myflorida.com) or by calling 888-419-3456.

We collect a lot of information and believe it is important to make that information available to you. From the website <http://www.FloridaHealthFinder.gov>, you can look up every facility we regulate, check their license status, get information such as the size of the facility, its owners, languages spoken by staff, and whether they accept Medicaid, Medicare or private insurance; among other items. You can also look up inspection reports and the legal orders issued for sanctions.

We take our role as a regulator very seriously. You and your loved ones should feel safe and secure at a health care facility, you should know about what the facility offers and what their history looks like. All of this information and more is available online, or from your local area office.

The local area office that serves Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Okeechobee and Indian River counties is at 5150 Linton Blvd. Suite 500 in **Delray Beach**. You can call (561) 381-5868.