

Frontline's eye-opening July 30 program, "Life and Death in Assisted Living", highlights the explosion of the assisted living center industry and the dangers that can result as older Americans increasingly make their homes there.

Clearly, disturbing abuses have occurred in assisted living facilities when elders are under represented. Unfortunately, "the rock no one wants to look under" is that, at times, the profit motive outweighs the requirement to provide adequate care. And, regulations for assisted living facilities are not adequate enough to safeguard against these abuses

Reprehensible stories like those of George McAfee, who died after ingesting industrial strength dishwashing liquid that his assisted living facility's staff failed to lock away, or of dementia patient Joan Boice, who died from complications of neglect after her three-month stay in assisted living, are simply unacceptable – and they are avoidable.

No one should be in an assisted living facility without a trusted and knowledgeable representative to advocate on his or her behalf. If a family member or friend is not available, there are other options.

At PFAC - the Professional Fiduciary Association of California, we want the public to know that working with a professional fiduciary who is a trained advocate for the rights, safety and care of older Americans is one of those options. The comprehensive professional services we offer are designed to help ensure that elders are properly cared for and in a safe, appropriate environment.

In California, the state with the highest level of regulation for occupational standards in our field, professional fiduciaries are trained, licensed and regulated experts who can step in to help guide care for those who can no longer manage their own affairs.

Professional fiduciaries, whether contracted through private agreement or appointed through the probate court, offer services for all kinds of people in need – especially elders. We provide all manner of support – from trust administration to medical care coordination to determining whether assisted living care is appropriate or more skilled medical care is required, as was the case in many of the Frontline stories.

PFAC supports efforts to further regulate and monitor the care provided in these kinds of environments, and our professional goal is to ensure that the people we serve live as fully, and as safely, as possible.

When family members and friends cannot be there to provide a watchful eye for their loved ones, professional fiduciaries step in to fill that role. As strong advocates for our clients, we are independent third parties who act as a first-line defense against the kinds of abuses outlined in the Frontline investigative report.

To learn more about professional fiduciaries and the work we do here in California, please visit www.pfac-pro.org.

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