

# Getting Started:

A Pioneering Approach to Culture Change  
in Long-Term Care Organizations

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Getting Started



Pioneer  
Network

*with the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute*

## **The Pioneer Network**

PO Box 18648  
Rochester, New York 14618

## **The Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute**

349 East 149th Street, 10th floor  
Bronx, NY 10451

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## **Credits**

### **Author**

Susan Misiorski

### **Editor**

Karen Kahn

### **Copyeditor**

Carolann Barrett

### **Designer**

Paxton Communications

### **Photos**

Center for Nursing and Rehab (CNR)  
Golden View  
Teresian House  
Providence Mount St. Vincent  
PictureQuest

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## Acknowledgements

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Dear Readers:

**T**he Pioneer Network first envisioned the development of this handbook several years ago. The project began with a group of Pioneers who graciously volunteered their time to interview representative nursing homes on the journey of cultural transformation. These volunteers gathered information that has been used to identify common themes and approaches in the culture change process. We wish to extend our deepest gratitude to these volunteers: Sue Burnett, Megan Hannan, Karen Love, William Painter, Vera Salter.

After gathering this initial information, additional wisdom was collected from other nursing homes that the Pioneer Network knew had been actively working towards culture change for three years or longer. Our sincere appreciation for gathering and documenting this additional information is extended to: Joanne Rader, Vera Salter, Joyce Semradek.

*Getting Started* is based upon much of the collective wisdom gathered during this early period in the project. The nursing homes that were interviewed freely shared the highs and lows of their change process. We wish to honor these organizations for their contribution:

*Apple Health Care, a multi-facility corporation (CT, MA, RI)*

*Baptist Home (Pittsburgh, PA)*

*Center for Nursing and Rehab (Brooklyn, NY)*

*Crestview Care Center (Bethany, MI)*

*Edgewood Centre (Portsmouth, NH)*

*Evergreen Retirement Center (Oshkosh, WI)*

*Fairport Baptist Home (Fairport, NY)*

*Lakewood Health and Rehab (Milwaukee, WI)*

*Linwood Care Center (Buffalo, NY)*

*Live Oak Living Center (El Sobrante, CA)*

*Marian Estates (Sublimity, OR)*

*Meadowlark Hills (Manhattan, KA)*

*Neville Center at Fresh Pond (Cambridge, MA)*

*Providence Mount St. Vincent (Seattle, WA)*

*Teresian House (Albany, NY)*

*Villa Maria Community Center (Villa Maria, PA)*

In 2003, the Pioneer Network sought grant funding to support the writing and editing of *Getting Started*. Financial support was received from the Retirement Research Foundation (RRF) and The Commonwealth Fund (CMWF). The Pioneer Network subcontracted with the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI) for development of this handbook. The Pioneer

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Network is extremely grateful for the financial support from RRF and CMWF, as well as PHI's generous in-kind donation. Without the support of these three organizations, this handbook would not have been possible.

Several organizations supported the development of the training modules included in the handbook. The Institute for Caregiver Education in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, contributed to several exercises and also reviewed all of the modules. LaVrene Norton from Action Pact (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) contributed the process for facilitating learning circles. We would like to extend our appreciation to both of these organizations for their support. In addition, we would like to honor Carin Tinney from PHI who co-authored the remaining modules with Susan Misiorski.

A team of national reviewers was assembled to read each piece of the handbook as it was developed. These reviewers donated a considerable amount of their time and wisdom and offered excellent suggestions for improvement throughout the writing and editing process. We wish to thank this review team for ensuring this handbook reflects a broad perspective: Rose Marie Fagan, Bill Keane, Wendy Lustbader, Peggy Powell, Joanne Rader, Vera Salter, Steve Shields, Carin Tinney, Hollis Turnham, Carter Catlett Williams.

In addition to the many individuals and organizations that contributed to this handbook, I would like to personally thank both the Pioneer Network (particularly Rose Marie Fagan) and PHI for giving me the opportunity to write *Getting Started*. For me, the writing was a part of my own personal journey, a time to gain further insight and clarity about the culture change process. I would also like to thank Karen Kahn, the director of communications at PHI, who very patiently edited this handbook and was a tremendous support with the writing. And finally, thank you to copyeditor Carolann Barrett, whose diligent attention to detail made *Getting Started* a much finer product.

We hope this handbook will be a support to organizations in their journey of transformation toward a person-centered culture.

Susan Misiorski

## About the Pioneer Network

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*When we transform nursing homes into human communities, places for living and growing, we will ultimately change the very nature of aging in America.*

—Rose Marie Fagan, Executive Director of the Pioneer Network, 2000

**T**he Pioneer Network is a national, not-for-profit organization that serves the culture change movement. Started by a group of people who share a common belief that our nation's view of aging must change, the Pioneer Network works to promote a new vision: a culture of aging that is life-affirming, satisfying, humane and meaningful in whatever setting that takes place—home, assisted living, or nursing home.

The Pioneers held their first gathering in Rochester, New York, in 1997. A small group of 33 professionals gathered to discuss common elements among various pioneering approaches to elder care that support vibrant living environments in nursing homes. As they sat together for the closing of that meeting, they recognized that others were out there who knew in their hearts that long-term care could be different. They vowed to continue to meet around the country to find those kindred spirits.

As the network has grown, so has its mission and vision. The Pioneers came to understand that the challenges faced in nursing homes today are a microcosm of elder issues in society as a whole. Until American society genuinely values its elders, our culture will not value the system or the workers

### Pioneer Network Values

- **Know each person.**
- **Each person can and does make a difference.**
- **Relationship is the fundamental building block of the transformed culture.**
- **Respond to spirit, as well as mind and body.**
- **Risk taking is a normal part of life.**
- **Put person before task.**
- **All people are entitled to self-determination wherever they live.**
- **Community is the antidote to institutionalization.**
- **Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.**
- **Promote the growth and development of all.**
- **Shape and use the potential of the environment in all its aspects: physical, organizational, psychosocial, and spiritual.**
- **Practice self-examination, searching for new creativity and opportunities for doing better.**
- **Recognize culture change is a journey, not a destination. It is always a work in progress.**

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that support them. For this reason, the Pioneer Network is aiming for nothing less than transforming the culture of aging in the 21st century.

To achieve its mission, the Pioneer Network:

- Creates communication, networking, and learning opportunities.
- Builds and supports relationships and community.
- Identifies and promotes transformations in practice, services, public policy, and research.
- Develops and provides access to resources and leadership.

The Pioneer Network connects individuals who are drawn to the organization's values and principles and are championing changes that bring these values into daily practice. These individuals work in long-term care homes and community-based settings, government, research, advocacy, education, and include residents and their families as well. Deep system change in long-term care is no small task. The support system offered through the Pioneer Network has given many individuals the encouragement, hope, and knowledge needed to keep growing the culture change movement.

Today, the Pioneer Network has a resource center, a speaker's/consultant bureau, a bi-annual newsletter, and hosts national conferences to share its message. The board of directors, composed of individuals from around the country who volunteer their time and talent to further the culture change movement, provides direction and support. The Pioneer Network is not a membership organization; it relies upon donations from individuals and organizations that support the mission.

For more information about the Pioneer Network, see [www.pioneernetwork.net](http://www.pioneernetwork.net).

## About the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute

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**T**he Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI) is a national nonprofit organization that focuses on strengthening the direct-care workforce within our nation's long-term care system through transforming workplace and caregiving practices and developing effective public policy. PHI's work is guided by the belief that creating quality jobs for direct-care workers is essential to providing high-quality, cost-effective services to long-term care consumers.

PHI's workplace practice and caregiving innovations have been developed in cooperation with several closely affiliated direct-care staffing agencies and training programs, including the highly successful Cooperative Home Care Associates of the South Bronx; Home Care Associates of Philadelphia; and Independent Care System, a nonprofit managed long-term care program for people living with disabilities in New York City.

PHI assists health care providers across the long-term care spectrum to adapt these practices to their specific environments. Our staff includes a diverse team of consultants, with experience in home care and nursing home management, long-term care culture change, organizational development, adult education, worker and consumer advocacy, and public policy development. PHI has coached nursing homes across the country on their culture change journeys, providing leadership support, strategic planning, staff training, and curriculum development. Many of the training activities described in Chapter 4 have been drawn from PHI's direct experience in working with these homes.

A recognized leader in long-term care workforce policy, PHI runs the National Clearinghouse on the Direct Care Workforce ([www.directcareclearinghouse.org](http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org)), a national information center on the staffing crisis in long-term care. In addition, PHI staffs the national Direct Care Alliance, an advocacy voice representing consumers, workers, and concerned providers who together are creating both quality jobs and quality care within the long-term care sector.

PHI's expertise in both industry practice and public policy has made the organization a valued partner to state and federal agencies and industry stakeholders. In affiliation with the Institute for the Future of Aging Services, PHI draws on this dual expertise in its role as designated national technical assistant for the Better Jobs Better Care Demonstration Project, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies.

To learn more about PHI, visit PHI's website at [www.paraprofessional.org](http://www.paraprofessional.org).

### PHI helps long-term care providers to:

- **Recruit and train direct-care staff.**
- **Create person-centered cultures.**
- **Build supportive work environments.**
- **Shape effective public policy.**

## About the Author

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**Susan Misiorski** has been active in the Pioneer Network since its inception in 1997. She served as president of the Network from 2000-2003, and continues to serve on the board of directors in addition to co-editing *Pioneer Networking*, the organization's newsletter.

Ms. Misiorski is an organizational culture change specialist for the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, providing consultation and training to support transformation in long-term care organizations. Prior to coming to PHI, Ms. Misiorski served as director of nursing for Genesis Health Ventures and then as vice president of nursing for Apple Health Care, Inc., where she spearheaded a culture change initiative.

Her other publications include "Pioneering Long Term Care Culture Change," in the October 2003 issue of *Nursing Homes Long Term Care Management* and "Building a Better Life: Transforming Institutional Culture," which appeared in the *Alzheimer's Care Quarterly* in summer 2001.

## Using This Handbook

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As more long-term care organizations have begun to understand the possibilities of culture change, the Pioneer Network has found that many are asking: "How do we do it?" *Getting Started* is designed to answer that question.

In this handbook we introduce the concept of culture change, explain its significance to the future of aging and long-term care in the United States, and outline a process for exploring culture change with residents, family, and staff.

Culture change is a journey. This handbook highlights in detail the first phase of that journey, offering examples of how some nursing homes have customized the process to fit the needs and desires of their staff and residents. The three-ring binder format reinforces the handbook's intended function as a working tool: readers can remove and use pages as needed. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 cover foundational statements; organizational assessment; and training for culture change. Each of these chapters includes support materials to facilitate that stage of the process.

While the handbook represents the collective wisdom of many Pioneers, it is not a complete report of all homes on the path of culture change. Currently, many homes across the United States are in some stage of their journeys. In addition, the change process outlined is not prescriptive. Each home has an existing culture from which to build.

Our intent is to illuminate a process that relies on person-centered values but is adaptable to individual environments. We encourage each organization using this handbook to customize these approaches, creatively growing the new culture specifically desired by their staff and residents.