

THE IMPACT OF THE EDEN ALTERNATIVE ON
QUALITY OF LIFE IN NURSING HOME RESIDENTS

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The recent release of the Federal Government's evaluation of nursing homes creates renewed interest in the experience of older adults entering nursing homes. The Omnibus Reconciliation Act focused on improving the quality of nursing home care. Improvements have been documented in such areas as restraint use. While most nursing homes strive to meet health and safety needs, emotional needs are often left unmet. Emotional needs can be assessed by examining quality of life. Research evaluating quality of life in nursing homes is limited. The Eden Alternative (Thomas, 1996) is a philosophy of nursing home care geared to improve quality of life. A quasi-experimental design was used to examine the hypothesis. The hypothesis was: There is a difference in quality of life between individuals residing in a nursing home utilizing the Eden Alternative Model and those residing in a nursing home utilizing a traditional nursing home model. There were 27 cognitively intact individuals interviewed at the control institution and 33 individuals in the intervention facility prior to the implementation of the Eden Alternative and nine months after implementation. Interviews included the Dementia Quality of Life Tool, the Geriatric Depression Scale, the UCLA Loneliness Scale, the Lubben Social Network Scale, and some personal interview questions. Data was also collected from the most recent Minimum Data Set (MDS). Significant differences were found between the groups

on the MDS items related to helplessness, loneliness and boredom. A significant worsening in cognitive function was also noted at the control institution. Significant differences were also noted with the UCLA Loneliness Scale and the Geriatric Depression Scale. Further investigation as to the impact of the Eden Alternative on quality of life is warranted. Much additional research remains to be done to identify the ideal environment for the older adult in this type of setting.