

Action Pact, Inc.

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Ask Pact

A Homelike Home



*"Ask Pact" is our own question-and-answer column where people can ask their Culture Change questions and have them answered by our seasoned team of trainers and educators. You may find some topics here that are relevant to you - if not, feel free to **Ask Pact!***

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**Dear Pact,
We'd like to make the physical environment of our facility more home like. There is so much to do and so many options. Where do we start? How can we give residents a say in their surroundings? And how have other facilities addressed this issue?**

- David

Dear David,
Each household or neighborhood should have a distinct character, perhaps in keeping with the name of the house or neighborhood or with an interior home style. We want to stay as far away from tract housing as possible, so design change as well as color change is important. Color alone is token and a very traditional institutional approach to individualization, so the more that the furnishings (both design and finishing) can reflect the character the better. So we have seen households that reflect an arts-and-crafts feel while others in the same building have a formal traditional or country style. The kitchen cabinetry, the archways in the common areas, the partial wall dividers, the book case units, the lighting fixtures, the artwork, the floor

choices and colors, and the furnishings all reflect these differences. This can be done for very little cost differential because your purchases will still often be from the same vendors – but it will move your environment from feeling like institution to feeling like home. I could give you facilities to tour that only distinguished with color, and those that distinguished with style of interiors and furnishings. You would quickly see the dramatic difference this gives in the feel of the building. You would leave the tour insisting that the flooring, wall treatments, wood finishes, and furnishings in each household should be distinctive. Be attentive to this principle in the common areas of the households, but also to the greatest extent possible in the resident rooms.

Within a given house, the resident rooms generally will need to have the same furnishings in order to take advantage of bulk purchasing, but there should be at least two if not three choices for window treatments and choices in bedspreads. This requires purchase of a few extra of each design to have in reserve. Wall color in resident rooms is often an issue because painters take you to the cleaners for individual room choice, and besides, it is nearly impossible to know which resident will be in which room at the time the painters need to know the room color. So you can

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Furnishings, *continued*

compromise with a neutral room color throughout the household, and then have repaint options for choice, or plan to offer borders for individualization of each resident room over the base color.



Other individualized touches can be created with swags. All windows could have a base curtain/drape that matches the walls, but swags could be available to change out the look and feel of a room. They could be different in color, fabric, plain or pattern, and even in style of draping on the rod. This, with bedspread choices can help a resident nicely “change out” a room. A shelf, windowsills, or other places designed for resident display of belongings will do a lot to assist in individualization. One facility offered a choice of small round table or desk that greatly added to the private room in very different ways. And finally – in Minnesota you will see a number of facilities that offer a private “kitchen” in rooms with built in cabinetry and space for a small refrigerator, an additional tiny sink and a microwave (see Nielson Place in Bemidji, Lyngblomsten, Bigfork Valley).

The individual room appointments can also be different by having magazine racks, wastebaskets and other things that reflect home. Of course, you will encourage families to bring in belongings that create home including the residents’ furniture. You could create a friendly brochure that helped families understand your principles and encouraged them to help the resident create home with some of their own belongings.

