

# Seminar To Tackle Nursing Home Issues

7/29/97



BY MARTIN SALAZAR  
*Journal Staff Writer*

An Albuquerque attorney will discuss nursing homes and what to do about patient problems during a Today's Law School seminar.

The seminar, which is free to the public, will be 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday at the State Bar of New Mexico offices at 5121 Masthead NE. For reservations, call the bar at 797-6000.

"There are many very fine nursing homes, but there are a handful of very bad ones," attorney Carl J. Bettinger said. "Almost everyone in a bad nursing home is getting bad care."

Bettinger said an attorney's advice should be sought whenever someone believes a family member is being neglected or abused and the nursing

home is not correcting the problem.

"There are ways to deal with that through civil litigation," he said.

Attorney Ramona Martinez, with the New Mexico State Bar Association's lawyer referral for the elderly program, and Doug Calderwood, with the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program of the State Agency on Aging, also will speak.

"I'll be discussing how people can go about selecting a nursing care facility," Martinez said. She said she will go over the recommendations that have been outlined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Calderwood will talk about the ombudsman program, which is an advocate for residents of long-term facilities like nursing homes. It serves as a mechanism for consumer complaints about long-term care,

Calderwood said.

About 16,000 people receive long-term care in New Mexico, he said.

"Our program is charged (with) protecting the rights of residents in long-term care facilities," Calderwood said.

Bettinger said that sometimes a lawsuit is the only way to correct a problem.

"Attorneys like myself can be the last resort ... if care is not properly provided and the facility does not properly respond to recommendations from the ombudsman office," Bettinger said.

Today's Law School is a series of monthly legal seminars that are co-sponsored by the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of New Mexico and the Albuquerque Journal.

## If you go

The free seminar on nursing home care will be 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday at 5121 Masthead NE. For reservations, call 797-6000.