



# BBS MEMO

Ohio Board of Building Standards

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## CLASSIFICATION OF CARE FACILITIES

Effective November 1, 2017, the Ohio Building Code (OBC) will be updated and based upon the 2015 International Building Code (IBC). As part of this update, significant Ohio changes will be made to Chapter 3 (Use and Occupancy Classification), especially to the classification of Groups I and R care facilities. These changes are intended to help code users properly classify buildings that are used to provide personal, custodial, and medical care services to individuals occupying these buildings.

The classification of a building is perhaps the most important design assumption to consider because the code manages the risks to an occupant by prescribing design criteria based upon the occupancy classification. Design criteria such as maximum allowable heights and areas, active and passive fire protection systems, and means of egress requirements are all determined based upon occupancy classification. If the occupancy classification is not appropriate, then the design features incorporated into the building may not be appropriate to manage the risks.

In order to properly design and classify any building, the designer needs to know the owner's goals and needs. During the early stages of design the designer might ask the owner several questions aimed at the size of each space and how each space within the building would be used and arranged, the type, quantity, and arrangement of materials that the owner intends to store in the building, the location and type of activities that will occur in the building, the age and number of occupants that are expected to be in the building, and the capability of the occupants to respond in an emergency. Perhaps the most important information needed by the designer to properly classify a care facility would be the number, age, and capability of each occupant.

Often when plans are submitted to a building department for approval, the designer does not communicate this critical information to the plans examiner. This puts the building department personnel in the position to ask for more information in order to verify that the building has been properly classified. This means that the plan review comes to a halt since most code requirements are based upon occupancy classification.

Building department personnel are not trained experts in assessing the capabilities of care recipients. As such, building department personnel should not make assumptions regarding the capabilities of the occupants when performing a plan review. The owner or the owner's authorized agent must provide this information to the building department personnel so that the proper occupancy classification of the building can be verified.

The following OBC Chapter 2 definitions are critical to the understanding and application of the new code language:

**Ambulatory Care Facility**  
**Care Facility**  
**Custodial Care**  
**Dwelling**  
**Incapable of Self-Preservation**  
**Medical Care**  
**Outpatient Clinic**  
**Personal Care Service**

Board staff has developed several tools to assist code users in applying these provisions of the code, including:

- **A care facility questionnaire** that the building department may require an owner of a care facility to complete and provide with the application for plan approval. If used, this questionnaire should be attached to the certificate of occupancy to enable the owner, the building officials, the fire officials, and the licensing agencies to know how the building was originally classified and approved.
- **A care facility matrix** that is a quick tool to help classify a facility.
- **A care facility flow chart** that is a more detailed tool to help classify a facility.
- **A residential flow chart** that is referenced from the care facility flowchart.
- **A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document** that answers many of the questions raised while working with stakeholders during the care facility code development process.

If you have further questions regarding these requirements or would like to be added to our stakeholder list to receive notifications of future building code rule changes, please call the Board's office at 614-644-2613 or e-mail to [BBS@com.state.oh.us](mailto:BBS@com.state.oh.us).