**BREAKS**

**Illinois Law states:** Employees must receive at least 20-minute break no later than 5 hours after arriving at work in each continuous 7½-hour shift (unpaid time).

We have always gone above this minimum standard- our general policy has been as follows:

If an Employee works an 8 hour shift they receive two 15 minute breaks and a ½ hour lunch break. The two 15 minute breaks are paid time, the ½ hour lunch break is not paid time. All employees must work a minimum of 2 hours prior to taking a break. An Employee must work a minimum shift of 51/2 hours to qualify to take a ½ hour lunch break (12 hour shifts get a third 15 minute break).

Breaks are to be taken on facility premises, and should be taken in the break room. Sleeping is not allowed during break times as all staff are required to respond promptly should an emergency arise. Smoking is allowed outside the break room only, and **only during specified break times.** There is no such thing as a “smoke break”! No employee should be in the break room more than three times during an 8 hour shift: 2 (15 min breaks) + 1 (1/2 hour lunch) = 3! (4 if you work a 12 hour shift).

**“But I don’t have time for my breaks!”**

Some staff may experience shifts where taking breaks is difficult if not nearly impossible to fit in. It is your right to take the meal break during your shift and you should make every effort to do so. We feel you will find yourself more productive if you take your breaks. If you do not take care of yourself, you will not be effective in taking care of others. If circumstances out of your control preclude you from taking your lunch break make sure to document it and make your supervisor aware of it. This is your responsibility, payroll has no other way of knowing to adjust your hours worked.

# Excessive Breaks

One of the most common complaints that we get from employees is that other employees are taking too many breaks, or are staying on break for too long. Disciplinary action will be taken against those violating the break rules. This practice causes undue stress for your coworkers and in the long run undermines our goal of providing top quality care for our residents and families.