

# WHEN TRANSPORTATION ISN'T ADVOCACY

(What I witnessed when facilities relied only on driving residents to the dentist)

## The Only Option for Miles

For two years, I worked in a small rural dental office — the only provider within half an hour of a memory care facility. The facility's solution was to transport residents to us. Caregivers would walk them in, make sure they were seated, and then wait in the lobby until dismissal. To the facility, that counted as "support." But what I saw in the chair told another story.

## The Illusion of Support

I saw everything: residents who were cheerful, angry, confused, or deeply sad. Each one vulnerable in their own way. Appointments would happen, treatment would be charted, and then whatever the dentist recommended was the exact line repeated by the front desk when calling families or POAs. No nuance. No explanation. No true consent. Just: "this is what the dentist says they need."

## The Patient Who Haunted Me

One woman with dementia came in crying. She looked at me, over and over, saying: "This isn't my dentist. I've seen my dentist my whole life, and this isn't my dentist." Nothing I said reassured her. To her, I probably looked like a child. She begged to see the dentist. I called the caregiver back from the waiting room to help calm her, and I went to get the dentist — who wasn't with a patient. She was scrolling through department store clothes on her computer. When I explained the patient was scared, confused, and crying, and asked her to come in, my boss didn't even look up. She just said: "Well, I don't know what you expect me to do. She has Alzheimer's. Just do whatever she lets you."

The dentist didn't walk in until the end, gave a routine exam, and had the receptionist call the patient's daughter to book restorative treatment. No explanation. No comfort. Just the next billable step.

"Well, I don't know what you expect me to do... just do whatever she lets you." — Dentist

## The Facility's Risk

This is what happens when facilities rely only on transportation. Residents aren't protected. Families don't get context. And facilities are left carrying the blame when families find out their loved one was dropped off at a strange office, frightened, without an advocate.

Can your community afford to confuse transportation with advocacy?

## The Advocacy Difference

With Dental Advocacy Support Services: - Patients with memory loss are treated with dignity - Families receive context and communication - Facilities avoid complaints, lawsuits, and reputational harm

Patient names have been changed to protect privacy.