

# Building a Dignified Living Environment

For this 15<sup>th</sup> edition of Rights Week, Vigî Santé, the Residents Committees and their partners have chosen to highlight the golden rule of the Vigî Santé code of ethics. This year's theme is ***Building a Dignified Living Environment***. Vigî Santé recognizes that our residents are the reason for our services. Every action we take towards them must be driven by respect, care for their well-being, and the recognition that they have the same rights and freedoms as any other person.

Whether we are caregivers, managers, family members, volunteers or visitors, we must take advantage of this opportunity to reflect on the meaning of our individual actions and bring a renewed sense of humanity to each moment we spend with our residents.

*"When it comes to human dignity, we cannot make compromises."*

~Angela Merkel



## DEFINING DIGNITY



*“A person is worthy because they exist as an end in themselves, and not simply as a means or tool to be used at will.”* This famous definition of dignity offered by the philosopher Emmanuel Kant reminds us that each person has their own existence and their own history, and that they have the right to respect and protection simply by virtue of being human. Dignity does not depend on social status, physical or intellectual performance; in other words, it is not influenced by external factors. It simply results from being part of the human race.

Dignity is maintained through our interactions with other individuals. One cannot talk about dignity without talking about respect, as the two concepts go hand in hand. To achieve an authentic form of respect, we must see and understand the other in all their individuality. We must see and respect the humanity of each person. It is by recognizing this humanity and maintaining a sense of respect that we enable a person to feel worthy.



## THE RIGHT TO DIGNITY

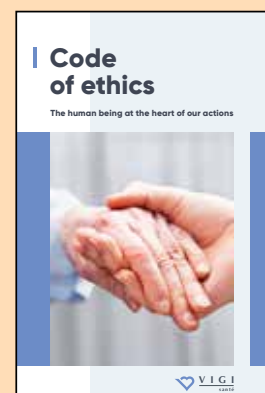
The first appearance of the notion of dignity in international law is found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which begins with the words: *“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...”* Article 1 clearly states that *“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”*.

The Quebec National Assembly has also recognized in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (1976) that *“Every person has a right to the safeguard of his dignity, honour and reputation”* (article 4).

## DIGNITY AT VIGI SANTÉ

Because its residents are the reason for its services, Vigi Santé considers the respect of human dignity to be the golden rule behind its code of ethics.

We acknowledge that every action taken towards our residents must find its inspiration in the same rights and freedoms all citizens enjoy. Our code of ethics reflects our collective and individual commitment to ensuring behaviors and practices that foster and maintain a healthy and harmonious living environment.



## DIGNITY IN HEALTH CARE:

The Quebec health system is based on values that we consider of great importance. The *Act Respecting Health Services and Social Services* offers important guidelines with regard to the management and provision of services to ensure that every resident is treated with *courtesy, fairness and understanding* in every intervention, *and with respect for his dignity, autonomy, needs and safety* (article 3).



## VOX POPULI – THE RESIDENTS POINT OF VIEW

To better understand the meaning of dignity, we need to consider it through the eyes of the residents. How do they define it?

**Dignity is...**

**1** *"It's in the approach that the staff takes – in their actions, and in their words. There's a certain way of approaching people, and it's important to have a certain mindset. It's also a matter of not feeling humiliated... and of maintaining your independence. We are human beings, and it's important that we be treated as human beings."*

**Mrs. C.** (Résidente, CHSLD Vigi Montérégie)

**2** *"Dignity is respect in general... but most importantly, when it comes to dignity, age doesn't matter!"*

**Mrs. Longuepée** (Resident, CHSLD Vigi Yves-Blais)

**3** *"It's all about respect, recognition of the other. When we receive care, it's something we see in their attitudes, their way of being."*

**Mr. Boyer** (Resident, CHSLD Vigi Brossard)

**4** *"It is respecting my person, who I am. Respecting my rhythm. Respecting my beliefs."*

**Mrs. Levasseur** (Resident, CHSLD Vigi Deux-Montagnes)

**5** *"Someone who keeps their promises and respects me as a person."*

**Mrs. Robinson** (Resident, CHSLD Vigi Pierrefonds)

## TRUE OR FALSE?

	True	False
<b>A</b> Since Mr. Asselin has significant cognitive impairments, we don't need to take the time to greet him and smile at him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>B</b> Ms. Johnson is at the end of her life and her condition has deteriorated significantly. The team must respect her desire not to receive certain treatments, and must support her by managing her pain as much as possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C</b> Mr. Rodriguez has just arrived at the centre. Since he's young, the staff calls him by his first name, without using titles like Sir or Mr. This is an acceptable practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D</b> Mrs. Davis likes to store her things in drawers, putting them away at her own pace. For her, this is a source of pride. The staff must respect her wishes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E</b> Attendants should always ensure that the door is closed when they assist Mr. Roy with undressing and putting on his pajamas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>F</b> Mrs. Lombardi has always enjoyed being dolled up. Despite her illness, being clean, well dressed and well coiffed preserves her identity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Answers at the back of the folder



## How can we contribute to respecting residents' right to dignity? People involved in the CHSLD speak out:

- 1 *"By listening to them, by respecting them without judgment. By considering them as human beings in their own right. By never infantilizing them."*

**Isabelle Groleau** (Head Nurse, CHSLD Vigi Orchidée Blanche)

- 2 *"By obtaining the consent of the resident in order to respect his or her right to accept or refuse to participate in the offered activities."*

**Geneviève Bélanger** (Recreologist, CHSLD Vigi Yves-Blais)

- 3 *"In my opinion, one way to contribute to the respect of one's dignity is to always keep in mind that residents are people with unique life experiences and we must take them into account. I always take into consideration their personal needs and desires during my interventions and I make decisions in collaboration with them."*

**Cassandre Grégoire-Bolduc** (Nutritionist, CHSLD Vigi Pierrefonds)

- 4 *"By letting residents be themselves, without judgment. Respecting them, even in moments of vulnerability."*

**Kevin Turmel** (Maintenance Worker, CHSLD Vigi Shermont)

- 5 *"By taking the time to introduce yourself during admission. Welcoming new residents by looking them in the eye and smiling shows them that we care about them and that they're important. We give them our full attention."*

**Ève Hardy** (Administrative Officer, CHSLD Vigi Brossard)

- 6 *"As a member of the Resident's Committee, I feel I can best contribute to the dignity of our residents through the simple act of acknowledgement - whether through a greeting or the simple act of a smile. I further believe that we must always be inclusive and mindful of residents - specifically when in their presence! My wish is that no resident ever feels that they don't count in the decisions that affect their lives."*

**Bridget Heffernan** (Member of the Residents' Committee, CHSLD Vigi Mont-Royal)



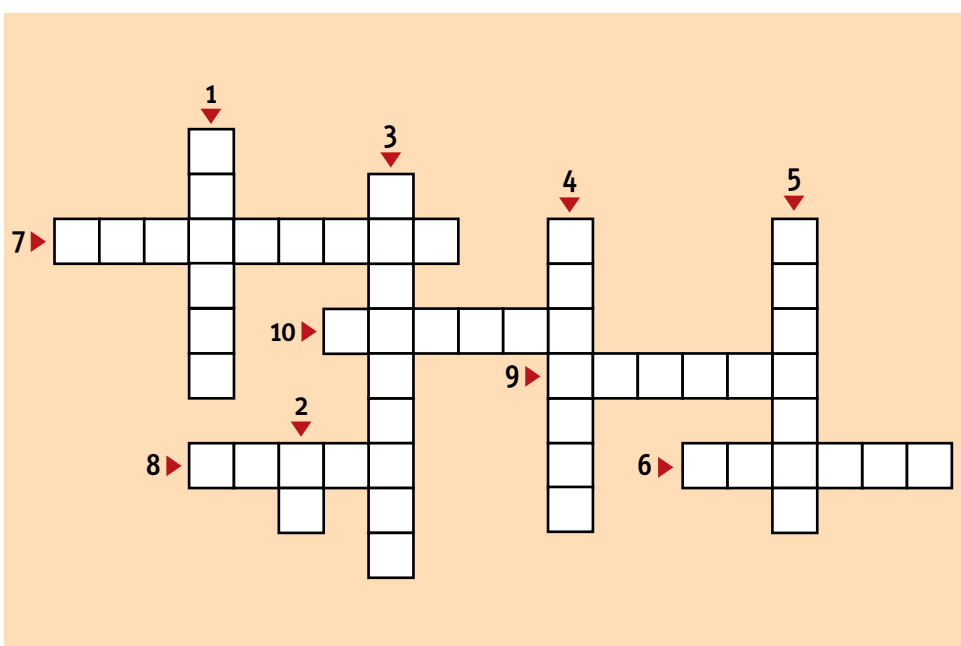
# DIGNITY WITHIN OUR CODE OF ETHICS (CROSSWORD PUZZLE)

## DOWN

- 1 We support a living environment approach where each resident remains \_\_\_\_\_ of himself.
- 2 We address residents by their family names, preceded by Mrs., \_\_\_\_\_ or Miss.
- 3 Our mission: "Through everyone's involvement and the excellence of our services, we will build a living environment open to the community, where each resident experiences true respect for their person in a unique environment frequented by \_\_\_\_\_, families, employees, and volunteers, and where the living environment and work environment become one".
- 4 The \_\_\_\_\_ of human dignity is the golden rule of our code of ethics.
- 5 In every intervention, each resident must be treated with courtesy, equity and understanding, with respect for their \_\_\_\_\_.

## ACROSS

- 6 The quality of the living environment is based on the principle of \_\_\_\_\_ respect, where everyone's collaboration is essential.
- 7 We must treat each resident at all times as we would hope for \_\_\_\_\_ or a loved one to be treated.
- 8 We adopt a \_\_\_\_\_, comprehensive and non-restrictive approach which takes each resident's basic needs and health needs into account.
- 9 Each resident has a right to the respect of their \_\_\_\_\_, pace, choices, tastes, autonomy, values, and beliefs.
- 10 All actions taken towards our residents must be inspired by respect and recognition of the same \_\_\_\_\_ and freedoms that any person has.



**The use of the masculine gender in this publication is employed solely to facilitate reading and is used without any discrimination.**

**Distribution of this publication is made possible thanks to the involvement of the following internal partners:**

- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Brossard
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Les Chutes
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Deux-Montagnes
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Dollard-des-Ormeaux
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Montérégie
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Mont-Royal
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Notre-Dame de Lourdes
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi l'Orchidée blanche
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi de l'Outaouais
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- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Saint-Augustin
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Shermont
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Yves-Blais
- Residents' Committee of the CHSLD Vigi Marie-Claret
- Vigi Santé's Users' Committee
- Your CHSLD's Residents' Counsellor
- Vigi Santé's Vigilance and Quality Committee
- Vigi Santé Quality, Client Experience and Living Environment Management Team
- Vigi Santé general management team



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**VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:**

**www.vigisante.com**

**News, publications and other information are available.**

***Une version française de ce feuillet  
est disponible sur demande.***

## INDISPENSABLE PARTNERS AT YOUR SERVICE

In its quest for excellence and to reiterate its focus on high-quality care and services provided in a humane, safe and high-quality environment, Vigi Santé relies on a number of trusted partners. With their complementary mandates, the residents' committee, the residents' counsellor and the Service Quality and Complaints Commissioner play important roles at the residence, and each of them contributes to improving the quality of our care and services and to advocating for residents' rights.

This complementary structure promotes a solution-seeking approach and, most importantly, creates space for listening, understanding and support.



## ANSWERS

**TRUE OR FALSE:** A-F, B-T, C-F, D-T, E-T, F-T

## DIGNITY WITHIN OUR ETHICAL CODE:

1: master 2: Mr. 3: residents 4: respect 5: dignity  
6: mutual 7: ourselves 8: human 9: person 10: rights