

Keeping Family and Residents Informed

Ensuring residents and family members are included and properly informed of all aspects from decision-making processes to activities to end of life. Putting standards in place to ensure family and residents are well informed reflects dignity, respect, information sharing, participation, and collaboration.

Improvement Recommendations

1. Include family and resident as partners in resident care by:
 - Conducting the care plan conference when the family member can participate.
 - This may need to be in the evening or on a weekend.
 - Consider participation via phone, video conference (i.e., Facetime or Zoom).
 - Learning from family and resident:
 - The likes and needs of the resident.
 - The typical daily pattern the resident followed.
 - What motivates the resident?
 - The residents' preferences for activities are both group and personal.
 - The resident's end of life wishes.
 - Engaging families' participation in family councils.
 - This ensures the family members learn and have input into policies, processes, and resources.
 - Have a resident-centered, open visitation policy that is equipped to accommodate family members to be with residents:
 - Provide support and training to staff to help them accommodate family members.
 - Give family members access to residents 24-hours a day to be inclusive to resident's care process.
 - Include accommodation for children in the visitation policy.
 - Accommodating couples an opportunity for privacy.
 - Make accommodations for families at the time of the resident's end of life.
2. Prior to or at time of admission, confirm with family and resident what the resident wants shared regarding their personal information. Ensure this happens consistently by putting in place a procedure that is uniformly implemented and reviewed on a regular basis.
 - Document in the medical record or care plan for easy access to all staff members.
 - Document any limitations or specifications that are not to be shared with family.

3. Ensure family members who will receive resident information are asked about the following:
 - The information family members want to receive:
 - Identify which changes in conditions they want to be informed of falls, weight loss, skin tears, doctor visits and lab results.
 - Change in plan of care.
 - Progress toward goals (e.g., rehab or other)
 - Frequently of information:
 - When there is a positive and/or negative change.
 - Weekly, biweekly etc.
 - Changes in available treatment options
 - Method of communication delivered: telephone, email, and/or text.
 - Set a routine time to notify family via telephone or email with updated information.
 - Types of involvement the family members would like to have:
 - Resident care conferences conducted by the interdisciplinary care team. This provides an open forum for families to get their questions and concerns presented and receive timely, unified answers.
 - Facilitate the family, as desired, in difficult communications with non-present family and/or friends.
4. Ensure staff is accountable to meet the informational needs and expectations of families:
 - Nurses are available to answer questions during times when families visit.
 - Inform family members in a timely manner about issues important to them (e.g., change in condition, emergency, hospitalization.)
 - Ensure the care team provides consistent, honest, and understandable information to the resident and family:
 - Use medical records/care plan to communicate current information.
 - Members of the team need to utilize the same keywords or phrases when providing information to minimize confusion or misunderstanding.
 - Attempt to have a consistent nurse or staff member speak to key family members.
 - Avoid medical jargon when speaking to family members.
 - Assess individual family members' understanding of the resident's information. Clarify as needed with written or other visual or auditory materials.
5. Billing clear and understandable:
 - Staff available to assist with billing questions.
 - Ensure changes in billing are explained and expected (e.g., services, products, policies.)
6. Provide support services for families, friends, and residents about how to care for and visit residents going specific illness and rehabilitation:
 - Stages of Alzheimer's Disease
 - Stages of Parkinson's Disease

- Cancer
 - Stroke Rehab
 - Cardiac Rehab
 - Rehabilitation following hip or knee replacement.
7. Provide end of life care and support to residents and family members including psychological, social, and spiritual support.
 8. Inform family and residents of events (e.g., memorials, celebrations, holidays).

Guided Discussion Topics

Conducting a guided discussion with a focus group or panel of employees, family members, and residents promotes collaboration, diverse viewpoints, problem-solving, engagement, clarity, alignment, and knowledge sharing—all of which contribute to the development of more effective and well-rounded action plans.

The questions below will assist in a guided discussion to help drill down to the root issues that may be impacting residents and family members based on the facility's most recent survey results. NRC Health recommends conducting guided discussions post survey on topics that the facility wishes to address for improvement.

CARE PLAN INPUT

1. How do staff members involve residents and their families in healthcare decision-making, and ensure they are informed of any changes to care plans?
2. How are residents and their families provided with opportunities to provide input into care plans and treatment decisions?
3. Are there policies in place to ensure that residents and their families are informed of any changes to care plans in a timely manner?

COMMUNICATION ABOUT HEALTH CHANGES

4. How do staff members keep families informed of healthcare events, such as falls, weight loss, and other significant changes in healthcare status, and what kind of communication channels are used?
5. How are families notified of significant changes in health status, and how often are updates provided?
6. Are there different communication channels available, such as family/resident council meetings, to receive updates and are those channels effective?

INFORMATION

7. How do staff members ensure that they are meeting the information needs of residents and their families, and are providing information in a clear and understandable way?
8. Are staff members trained to identify and respond to the information needs of residents and their families?
9. Are there opportunities for residents and their families to ask questions or seek clarification regarding information changes and frequencies?

STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

10. How do you ensure that all staff members are aware of their responsibilities when it comes to communicating information to residents and families?
11. Are there guidelines and procedures in place for communication of special events and activities and are there specified frequencies for when these occasions are shared?
12. How does leadership designate communication responsibilities between departments?

LEADERSHIP OVERSIGHT

13. How does the leadership team monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of communication and involvement efforts from staff to ensure residents and families are well informed?
14. What specific metrics or indicators does the leadership team use to assess the effectiveness of staff communication to residents and their families?
15. How frequently does the leadership team review these metrics and indicators, and what steps do they take based on their findings?

RESPECTING PRIVACY

16. How do staff members ensure that they are respecting the privacy and confidentiality of residents and families while keeping them informed of important healthcare information?
17. What policies and procedures are in place to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of residents and their families?
18. How are staff members trained to recognize and respond to potential privacy and confidentiality concerns when communicating healthcare information?

BILLING COMMUNICATION

19. What is the process for communicating billing changes or updates and how does staff ensure that these statements are accurate, clear, and easy to understand for the residents and their families?

20. In what ways do staff members ensure that residents and families are informed about billing and payment expectations from admission throughout their stay?
21. Are staff members trained to manage difficult billing conversations and what resources or support is available to them to handle these conversations?