Engaging Residents and Families to Improve Experience and Outcomes

These great ideas and practices are excerpted from the National Nursing Home Quality Care Collaborative Change Package, a curated collection of successful practices of high-performing nursing homes: https://www.lsqin.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/NH-ChangePackage-032615-Final-508.pdf

Engaging Residents

- Recognize and honor resident contributions and opinions.
- Welcome new residents by creating opportunities for them and the staff to get to know each other. For example, have a welcome gathering to introduce the new residents. Even people anticipating a short stay will benefit by being known by others who live and work at your home. Ask residents, and their families as appropriate, what information they would be comfortable having you share about their history with others who live there. Share about their psycho-social assessments and preferences with staff.
- Create a household notebook that provides information about the person’s life with information similar to what you may see in an obituary (but you don’t have to wait till they die to learn it). Examples: attributes, hobbies, accomplishments of resident’s life. Make sure to get the residents’ permission to share this and follow all data security and confidentiality requirements. Make sure this information has been incorporated in the individualized care plan.
- Publish a birthday list that includes resident and staff birthdays to honor and celebrate each other’s special day.
- Create a game to help people get to know each other. Examples: share pieces of a biography of a resident and ask staff to identify them (or vice versa), or identify a baby picture.
- Organize and align operations with residents’ routines. Ensure staff can honor resident preferences and have the expectation that everyone will help them (staff and residents) do so.
- Conduct care conferences in the location most comfortable to the resident and best promotes openness and sharing. For example, in the resident’s room. This also makes it accessible to the CNA caring for the resident, and promotes their attendance.
- Promote bi-directional relationships between residents and staff. For example, a buddy or guardian angel program that matches residents and staff persons in a long-term relationship. Allow staff paid time to nurture these relationships.
• Create a “Resident Life Committee” composed of residents and staff who come together to discuss any issues or ideas created by individual neighborhoods or the overall nursing home. Use their suggestions to make changes that contribute to the residents’ quality of life. Examples: adding their favorite foods to the menu, arranging for a requested music event, etc.

• Create opportunities for the residents to “give to others” and promote meaning in life. This is about reciprocity, which is fundamental to relationships. Examples: gardening to produce food that is part of the meal, help gather food for food shelf drive, participate in creating a gift when someone living or working at the home has a family baby arriving, select name from local or internal giving tree at holiday times so that staff and residents share the holiday as a community, help staff with English as a second language needs, collect or provide donations for individuals/groups in need.

• Feature a resident monthly at household meetings along with their family present to provide an opportunity to meet everyone and talk about their lives and interests.

• Celebrate different staff and resident cultural traditions as a way to better understand and appreciate differences and similarities. For example, sharing foods, customs, and traditions.

• Support residents to become involved and celebrate life events of staff such as weddings, births, etc.

• Establish discussion groups of interest to residents. For example, an ecology club. Invite community members to participate.

• Make use of available technology. Use video streaming to broadcast the religious services at the nursing home to allow residents to participate in real time. Provide easy access to the internet to residents.

Engaging Families

• Welcome and encourage family members to communicate with staff and the resident.

• Provide staff contact information, including which person to contact when.

• Proactively initiate frequent communication with family members (regular calls or meetings) and discuss all aspects of resident care and life.

• Create “two-way” communications – sharing with family and listening to their opinions and concerns.

• Provide feedback to families – if you say you are going to follow-up, do so, and let them know what you found out.

• Learn from family members to care for residents as they know them.

• Encourage families and friends to feel welcome and “at home” when visiting.

• Invite family and friends to visit anytime, eliminating visiting hours for resident’s family members.
- Give family information on how to access the building at times when doors may be locked.

- Provide access to beverages and comfortable places to visit.

- Provide family members with ideas of activities to do with residents when visiting, especially for family members of residents with dementia who may not be able to express their needs in words. Examples: help them decorate their room, bring in the family pet for a visit, share family photo albums, share stories, or join them for coffee in the dining room.

- Invite family members to activities the resident enjoys and would enjoy having family members at.

- Invite family members to witness and provide care as they and the resident desire and in accord with the resident’s wishes.

- Ask for suggestions from residents and families about activities they would like to attend in the community and follow up on their suggestions and provide transportation. Examples: trips to see the changing colors of the leaves, a shopping trip, attend religious services, attend a community event, or attend a local play.

- Ask for suggestions from residents and families about community members or groups they would like to invite to the nursing home and follow-up on their suggestions. Examples: invite local social, religious, business, and other special interest groups (Red Hat Club, ladies aid groups, Kiwanis, Masons, card clubs, schools) so residents can participate and be informed about community news, activities, and events.

**Engaging Residents and Families in Quality Improvement**

- Routinely seek resident/family input and participation in your continuous improvement efforts.

- Use an inclusive process that involves staff, residents and families to establish, review, share, and reaffirm mission and values.

- Survey staff and residents regarding whether the values and mission are evident in the day-to-day work of the organization.

- Empower all staff, residents, and family members to look for improvements. Use both formal and informal opportunities, i.e., committees, teams, regular rounds to solicit their ideas, and engage them in implementation of their ideas.

- Determine who needs to be involved in the hiring process based upon the position to be hired. Include opportunities for direct supervisor, co-worker, and resident involvement in the selection process. Provide guidance for those unfamiliar with any key hiring policies.

- Empower residents and families to get involved by identifying areas of improvement and working towards the solution.
• Get everyone involved in setting goals including staff, residents, families, management and the board

• Openly and transparently share your performance data with staff, board, residents and families.

• Involve resident and family members, the inter-disciplinary team members, and direct care staff in the investigation of falls and ideas for prevention.

• Create an internal referral program for staff and residents/families to increase the number of residents.

• Develop relationships with families for help in fundraising to provide needed equipment and materials.

• Solicit resident and family feedback on the physical environment and explore opportunities for improvement.

• Encourage residents and their families to make their living space work for them. Personalize rooms with residents’ belongings. Make adjustments so residents can reach their belongings and function as independently as their physical abilities allow. Allow refrigerators in residents’ rooms.

• Meet regularly with staff and residents to discuss how consistent assignment is working, including reviewing assignments to ensure that relationships are going well. When there are changes due to residents leaving, arriving, or dying, review the assignments to ensure that they remain fair and are working well.

• Use feedback from residents and families in making assignments, making changes in resident assignment only when it will benefit the resident. Engage the interdisciplinary team in working to find solutions and supports for the areas that are challenging.