



Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes is a national campaign to improve the quality of care and life for the country's 1.5 million people receiving care in nursing homes. Nursing homes, their staff and consumers can join in this effort by working on the campaign goals, designed to improve quality.

www.nhqualitycampaign.org

Goal #8: Improving Consistent Assignment

What does consistent assignment mean?

Consistent assignment means that residents see the same caregivers (registered nurse, licensed practical nurse or certified nursing assistant) almost every time they are on duty. Many residents are more comfortable with caregivers who know and understand their personal preferences and caregiving needs. Consistent assignment is also called primary assignment.

What should you know about consistent assignment?

Consistent assignment is a key step in giving care that is individualized (resident-centered). Consistent assignment builds strong relationships between residents and staff. Strong relationships are central to quality care for residents and family.

A nursing home adopts "consistent assignment" to strengthen relationships between individual residents, their families, friends and the caregivers. Staff who take care of the same residents are happier in their jobs and tend to stay in their jobs.

Benefits for Residents:

- Residents don't have to explain to new staff how to care for them day after day.
- Residents feel more comfortable with the intimate aspects of care when they know their caregivers.
- Residents feel more secure with caregivers they know.
- Residents with dementia are much more comfortable with familiar caregiver faces.
- Consistent caregivers know what residents' behaviors mean.
- Residents and their families develop relationships with staff over time.

Benefits for Consistently Assigned Caregivers:

- Caregivers know what each resident wants and needs. They can give better individualized care. They are more organized in their work.
- Nurses and nursing assistants who work with the same residents most of the time are more likely to notice slight changes in their health. This can prevent larger health problems.
- Caregivers are more likely to understand and respond to the behaviors of residents with dementia. This is important because residents often let others know what they want and need through their actions.

- Many staff members like consistent assignment because they are able to really help the residents and make a difference in their lives. These are the reasons why they like working in a nursing home.

Benefits for Nursing Homes:

- Staff get to know each resident's routines and develop a relationship with him or her. This makes a better workplace.
- Caregiver absences are reduced. They are more likely to stay in the job when meaningful relationships develop. Caregivers know they are being counted on by the team members and residents.

How do nursing homes achieve consistent assignment?

Many homes that use consistent assignment stop rotating nursing assistants and nurses from one neighborhood, wing or floor every few weeks. Staff are assigned to one area of the home so that they can serve one group of residents. These consistent assignments apply to nurses and nursing assistants. Sometimes housekeeping, dietary and other members of the caregiving team are also consistently assigned.

Of course, it is not possible for the same nursing assistant or nurse to work the same shift every day of the week. Staff need time off or may need to change their work hours. As a result, residents may see the same team of caregivers during the week. But, they may see a different team on weekends and holidays.

For the Advancing Excellence campaign, a nursing home is successful using "consistent assignment" when staff are caring for the same residents on at least 80% to 85% (percent) of their shifts. This means on at least four out of five days, evenings and nights the resident has the same caregivers.

How can you find out whether a nursing home uses consistent assignment?

- Talk with residents about whether they have a nursing assistant who cares for them most days. If the resident cannot answer or has dementia, talk with the family.
- Ask nursing assistants if they work with the same residents daily over the long term or whether they sometimes rotate to another group of residents.
- Ask the director of nursing and the nursing home administrator how nursing assistants are assigned to care for certain residents.
- Ask if the nursing home uses consistent assignment.

How can you encourage consistent assignment?

- Encourage the nursing home to join Advancing Excellence and chose consistent assignment as a facility goal.
- If the nursing home does not currently use consistent assignment, talk with the director of nursing and the nursing home administrator. Ask them to test it on a small scale (one neighborhood, wing or shift of the nursing home). In this way, problems that are likely to come up can be solved on a small scale. Management and staff can see how it works. Then, they will feel more comfortable using consistent assignment in the whole building.

***Find out if your nursing home is part of the Advancing Excellence Campaign.
To sign up or get more information, go to www.nhqualitycampaign.org***