

Residents' Rights Training Strategy

The Airplane Analogy

One creative strategy for training is to utilize a familiar scenario, something that most individuals are familiar with or have experience with, for comparative purposes. The following compares the experience of being a passenger on an airplane to the experience of living in a long-term care facility. Invite participants to talk about the similarities and differences. The list below can help you lead the discussion!

EXPLANATION

1- Personal belongings - very limited

- moving from a private residence into a long-term care facility, choosing which personal items to take and which must be stored or gotten rid of

Related rights: Dignity & Respect, Freedom of choice

2- Assigned a seat - limited choice of location

- having your room assigned at the long-term care facility

Related rights: Freedom of choice, Accommodation of needs

3- Assigned seatmates

- being assigned a roommate, having a change of roommate

Related rights: Freedom of choice, Accommodation of needs

4- Access to bathroom restricted

- having to wait until an aide is available to assist you to the toilet

Related rights: Accommodation of needs

5- Eat what and when served

- meals served at regimented times, special diets (low-salt, pureed, diabetic) strictly enforced

Related rights: Freedom of choice

6- Restraints are used! (You need to fasten your seatbelt.)

- chemical or physical restraints inappropriately used

Related rights: Accommodation of needs, Freedom of choice

7- No place to go

- Lack of transportation to outside events/activities, not enough activities scheduled

Related rights: Participation in activities

8- Dependent on attendants

- Reliance on staff for care needs as well as socialization.

Related rights: Participation in activities, Freedom of choice, Dignity and Respect

9- Must trust pilots

- Must trust staff and administration of health care facility.

Related rights: Freedom of choice, Accommodation of needs

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WHY DON'T RESIDENTS EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS?

- ✓ Residents are intimidated by the idea of appearing in any way to criticize the nursing facility's staff or policies.
- ✓ Most residents do not know they have specified rights and do not know what their rights are in a long-term care facility.
- ✓ Most residents do not even think about their problems and concerns in any context related to their "rights".
- ✓ Residents feel they have very few opportunities to exercise control over their lives.
- ✓ Residents have few relationships with which to practice interactive or assertiveness skills or to negotiate their rights.
- ✓ Even residents who are aware of their rights must choose their "battles" and often put up with daily violations of their individuality and dignity because:
 - a) It requires too much strength to challenge each encounter;
 - b) They are easily labeled troublemakers;
 - c) They are dependent for their care on those very people who may be the violators, and they are, therefore, hesitant to criticize them, and;
 - d) Often they experience a sense of defeatism.
- ✓ Residents' autonomy is undermined from the start by the very fact that most residents would rather not be in a facility; many did not have much of a role or choice in the decision to be there, and most have no other options.
- ✓ Since many of the rights are violated as a part of the daily facility routine they have come to accept, most residents would never articulate them as rights-related problems or problems that anything can be done about.
- ✓ Many residents face a tension between their desire for independence and their need for assistance.
- ✓ Residents often feel more comfortable championing another's problem than asking for help themselves.
- ✓ Residents face physical, emotional, psychological, social, and mental disabilities that make it difficult for them to voice their concerns.

EXAMPLES OF THINGS A RESIDENT OR FAMILY MEMBER CAN ASK NURSING FACILITIES TO PROMOTE AND IMPLEMENT REGARDING RESIDENTS' RIGHTS

- Educate residents and their families about their rights.
- Educate and sensitize every level of staff about residents' rights.
- Give residents every opportunity to exercise control over their lives and to have intelligent discussions. Encourage residents to practice interactive and / or assertiveness skills and to negotiate for their rights.
- Incorporate resident participation and self-determination into every aspect of nursing facility service (i.e., resident advisory committees for food services, activities, housekeeping, resident councils, etc.)
- Utilize the information and wisdom of residents and their representatives to help develop and conduct training programs for staff.
- Orient all staff to the residents for whom they will care and promote relationship building between staff and residents.
- Establish a grievance committee comprised of residents, family and staff representatives, and administration.
- Encourage and promote open exchange of ideas, recommendations, and concerns among residents, families, staff and administration.

Promote a sense of community within the facility, for example, by involving residents in the organizing of activities, developing resident councils and designing activities that promote interaction and intellectual and emotional stimulation.