

Communicating Community Standards

Recommended Participants: Staff members and long-term care ombudsman if available

Activity Type: Small Group Discussion

Explanation: This activity can be adapted to demonstrate any of the resident rights. The desired outcome for this activity is for the staff to view resident rights as community standards rather than only compliance tasks. Community standards are those expectations that are generally accepted among the public to be a legal right or a standard of courteous behavior. For example, the right to vote and the right to receive mail unopened are legal rights and therefore community standards. Advance notification of a scheduled activity such as a church social is an expectation of people living in the community. A resident would expect the same courtesy.

Tips for honoring community standards are outlined on pages two and three. Discussions and case examples are provided. The group leader can choose other areas that have been identified as needing improvement in the facility and use specific examples to increase the staff's understanding.

Adaptations: To adapt this group activity for individuals, videotape the group program (with the participants' permission) and show and discuss the video with staff members who are unable to attend the group. Copies of pages 2 and 3 of the handouts should accompany the video. If the group leader believes some staff members will be unable and/or uncomfortable with reading the materials, read all the information out loud; rather than asking the students to write the answers, ask them to think about their answers and then respond verbally.

This activity can be adapted to include family members and residents. The group facilitator should be experienced and have a good rapport with staff, residents and family members. Safety of expression and confidentiality should be assured for all attendees.

Tips for Honoring Community Standards and Resident Rights

I. Community Standards

Discussion and Case Examples:

Think community standards first, regulations second.

We knock on residents' doors and wait for an answer (when the resident is able to give one) because this is part of our culture and our community standard. We speak to a resident when we enter a room because that is a common courtesy. When you are unsure, ask yourself, how would I react in this situation if I were in my neighborhood? What is the community standard?

Regulations are guidelines that were developed based on community standards.

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II. How Would I Feel?/How Does the Resident Feel?

Discussion and Case Examples:

Community Standards /Resident Rights are based on the Golden Rule of empathy or doing unto others as we would have them do unto us. The first step is to ask ourselves how we would feel in the same situation. For example, if I had diarrhea and vomiting, how soon would I want the staff to respond?

The second critical step toward empathy is to notice how the resident feels/reacts. While we share similar feelings with every human being, we are all unique, e. g., if a resident who is frail and a loner has a disoriented resident come into her room, how does she react? Ask yourself has the resident expressed a reaction to me or am I assuming I know what she feels? Do I expect the resident to react as a health care professional with training about dementia and an ability to move quickly or as a resident who may be frightened?

Empathy begins with me and ends with the resident.

III. Routine Is Critical to Good Health

Discussion and Case Examples:

Some people are morning people. Some people are night people. Some people must have their caffeine. Some people must have their warm milk. Routine helps us remember the day of the week, feel more kindly toward others and improves our sense of security and belonging. Most people react to changes in their routine, especially when they are given no control over the changes. Most people react to changes outside of their control with anger, disappointment and/or low self-esteem.

***Honoring residents' routines is critical to residents' health
and it is a cornerstone for honoring
community standards and resident rights.***

IV. Only the Dead Are without Conflicts

Discussion:

Our varied opinions, personalities and preferences make life interesting and make each of us unique. We all benefit from being heard and being encouraged to vent our feelings and frustrations. This is especially necessary for residents.

***Our best care is listening and honoring what we have heard. One of the
most important community standards
is listening to another person.
Listening is the first step toward honoring resident rights.***