

Activities to Call Attention to Residents' Dining Experience

Purpose of Activities:

- To call attention to resident dining experience
- To amplify the Residents' Voice on the dining experience
- To get residents involved in food service planning
- To identify ways to overcome challenges to quality dining experience

Activity #1: Cook Off

The cook-off activity requires two or more groups of residents and staff cooking a product (i.e. chili) with different recipes. Additional residents and staff members will be the judges of this event. Another option would be for residents to demonstrate cooking techniques or special recipes (i.e. southern fried chicken) and prepare an entire meal.

Things to do:

- Find a handicapped accessible location for the event (churches, community centers, facilities and senior centers). Also think about the parking of buses.
- Select a theme for the event (i.e., type of food to make such as cakes, pies, cookies, etc.).
- Ask for sponsors (grocery stores/facilities/food vendors) to donate food and/or paper products and decorations for the event.
- Send invitations for nursing homes, community leaders, and other important guests.
- Get volunteers to decorate the room, assist residents into the building, parking and directing parking, serving food, and clean up.
- Find volunteers at local senior centers, Ombudsman volunteers, Area Agency on Aging staff, college students, and senior volunteer agencies.
- Contact local media and invite them to the event.
- Plan a short Residents' Rights presentation and ask the residents in the audience to respond to these questions.
 - How can dining services be improved to make your meals more enjoyable?
 - What makes your meals and dining experience positive?
- What is your favorite recipe? Why is it special to you?

Activity #2: Facilities Cook Residents' Recipes at Every Meal for a Week

The facility will ask residents to submit recipes and feature these recipes in meals for the entire facility for a week.

Things to do:

- Talk with Administrator and Food Services Director about incorporating residents' recipes as part of Residents' Rights Month Celebration.
- Announce the resident recipes used. Have recipes on placemat or table tent. Interview residents at meal time with Residents' Rights questions.
- Develop a food committee that meets weekly to discuss residents' dining concerns and suggestions for improvement.

Activity #3: Residents' Rights Month Cookbook

Residents and members of the aging network will submit recipes and comments about the "dining experience" and "special dining experiences." These items will be incorporated into a cookbook.

Things to do:

- Encourage residents to submit recipes for the cookbook.
- Have a contest to see how many recipes you can collect from your facility or area.
- Create a press release notifying everyone of a residents' participation.

Activity #4: Provide Community Education about Residents' Rights and Dining

Ombudsman or other advocates can submit Letters to the Editor and press releases with information about resident's rights to educate the community.

Things to do:

- Submit Letter to the Editor and a press release.
- Host a community presentation on Residents' Rights and dining.
- Ask facilities to allow you to do a presentation to their staff about Residents' Rights.
- Do presentation on "What Dining Means" to community, residents, families and staff.
- Talk about challenges around residents having a positive dining experience.

Activity #5 Regional Residents' Rights Month Rally/Celebration

To celebrate and educate the public about Residents' Rights.

Things to do:

- Location - see above
- Invite ombudsmen to be part of the planning process.
- Contact the press secretaries of elected officials as soon as you get a date. This allows you to get on their calendars early.
- Write press releases about rally.
- Find refreshments (i.e., cake and punch or cookies) for the event. Find people to donate money or refreshments.

- Contact volunteers for set up of rally.
- Look at things to do for Activity #1 Cook Off for additional ideas

Activity #6 Learning Circles with Dietary Staff and Residents

Encourage communication between residents and staff members about food service. Ombudsman can lead Learning Circle with dietary staff and residents (see additional resources for Learning Circle information)

- Ask staff to participate and set date for meeting
- Ask residents and resident council members to participate
- Review rules of learning circle

Ask the following questions:

- What is your favorite mealtime experience?
- Is there anything about the dining room environment, or where you eat your meals, that could be changed or improved?
- What special food events, holiday meals or celebrations do you most enjoy?
- If you were served something that you disliked eating, what would be a good alternative or substitute meal that you would enjoy?
- If given the opportunity, would you participate in meal preparation, and if so, what would you like to do?
- At the end of the session, ask everyone how they thought it went, ask if they would like to continue these sessions as a group.