



Wondering About Wandering?

Insights Into F-Tag 323 and Compliance For the Wandering Patient

The intent of F-Tag 323 specific to the wandering resident is designed to preclude unsafe wandering or elopement that results in actual harm to the resident.

A resident's individual risk may be any external factor, circumstance or resident characteristic that influences the likelihood of an accident.

Unsafe wandering is defined as locomotion with no apparent destination, most often associated with dementia. It is moving from place to place without a fixed plan; without purpose. Designation of "unsafe" includes an area that is physically hazardous to the resident.

Assessment of a resident for causes of wandering behaviors should include both reversible and irreversible origins. Wandering may or may not be associated with Exit Seeking behaviors.

The most hazardous form of wandering is elopement. Elopement occurs when a resident who requires supervision leaves a "safe" area without permission or without the knowledge of the caregiver staff and does not return.

Some interventions that would address potential or actual negative resident outcomes would include:

- ~ Safe, supervised areas for unrestricted movement
- ~ Addressing underlying behavior i.e. boredom, pain, or seeking physical comfort or functional task i.e. toileting or hunger/thirst
- ~ Monitoring external factors i.e. temperature, lighting and/or noise levels
- ~ Staff assignments that ensure resident familiarity

Bed alarms are frequently utilized for the resident who leaves their bed to wander or who is at risk for falls. The use of alarms in conjunction with an individualized Plan of Care is an effective approach to safeguard the wandering resident, particularly during night time hours.

The circle of ongoing care for a resident at risk for wandering or elopement is fluid and constant. It is an ever-changing, never-failing systematic approach to resident risk, identified behavior, response to behavior and individualized Plan of Care. Components of care delivery that should be reflected in a resident's Plan of Care are: Monitor or Modify; Identify; Implement an Intervention; Evaluate the effectiveness of the Intervention.

Noncompliance with the intent of F-Tag 323 in relationship to resident wandering or elopement is measured by the effectiveness of a facility's policy and the facility's response to a resident elopement. The facility must demonstrate both established and effective measures or practices that would have prevented or limited the resident's exposure to hazards.