



Meeting Family Expectations within Regulations

It can certainly be helpful to a resident's overall plan of care when he or she has an involved family. And then there are those families whose intentions are good, but reality indicates that the family members will have unrealistic expectations or requests. Quite often, it is the family's requests that do not coincide with state and federal regulations which can bring about a lot of strife. A perfect example of this is when a family member insists on restraining devices to prevent a fall.

Regardless of the motivation, guilt, fear or misperception, helping well caring family members understand the regulations and responsibilities of your facility is a necessary step in ensuring the best care for all of your residents.

Some things you can do to prepare family members:

- Encourage family members to review your previous survey experience including your plan of correction. This is a great opportunity for someone who does not know the industry to learn quickly about what expectations are on a facility as well as what resources a facility devotes to improving on quality of life for the residents.
- Always explain why you can or can't meet a family request. The more opportunity you have to educate the family the better chance you will have of containing irrational requests.
- Always involve the resident in the decision making process.
- Don't forget to show gratitude for families who support the endeavors of the facility. Sending thank you notes to families or a free ticket for lunch when a family visits can open the door to creating good communication.
- Make sure that family members have access to Resident's Rights and state survey code books. The more a family member understands the pressures to meet requests while meeting regulations the easier your conversations with those families can be.
- Be proactive in your communication. Don't wait until a care conference or the family's next visit to tell them there has been a major change in the care plan. It can be alarming for a family member to come into a facility and see mom in a new wheelchair that looks like it is not comfortable to the naked eye. Letting families know ahead of their visits that you are working on improving their loved one's quality of life is a great way to build trust.

Positioning family members as true and active care givers within your facility can benefit everyone. It helps to alleviate guilt and fear for the involved family, it encourages all staff to communicate openly about what interventions are taking place for the resident and it positions the resident as the most important person to everyone involved in his or her care.