

THE VALUE OF SATISFACTION SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

One of the best ways to build good relationships with families and residents is to convey to them their concerns are taken seriously by soliciting their feedback through satisfaction surveys and interviews. Instead of considering these tools as simply a venue for complaints, look at them as an opportunity for improvement or validation of success.

After all, it's better for residents and family to voice their dissatisfaction about an issue to you first, rather than to a state surveyor or attorney, and it's an excellent way to obtain documentation of areas where they are truly satisfied with care and services.

SURVEYS

Developing your own survey can take time, effort and money, so research available resources before proceeding. Some state regulatory agencies conduct their own nursing home satisfaction surveys, so you may be able to tailor those questions to fit your facility needs. There are also companies that sell or conduct customized surveys for a fee. If your facility chooses to develop their own survey, keep these things in mind:

- ❑ Keep the survey simple by using checkboxes or rating scales so they are easy to fill-out and compile later.
- ❑ Develop questions that will help you gauge your customer services, such as “do you feel staff listens to you when you voice a concern?” “Are their responses timely?”
- ❑ If you are mailing the survey, include a postage-paid or tear-off postcard for easy return and remember to provide an e-mail option.
- ❑ Set a date needed for return and allow enough time for reasonable compliance; follow-up as needed.
- ❑ Limit your surveys to once a year, so as to allow enough time to adequately address concerns. Consider sending the survey with a care plan invitation, and then be ready to discuss the results during the meeting.
- ❑ If the surveys are sent collectively, summarize and prioritize the responses; then address the issues as part of your facilities quality assurance process.
- ❑ If a serious situation comes to your attention, such as an indication or allegation of abuse, proceed immediately with an investigation; and follow your facility's policies accordingly.
- ❑ Thank the respondents for their time and attention to this matter, and offer feedback as to what has been or will be done with the information.
- ❑ Distribute the overall results to your staff, listing both the things done well and things that need improvement. Include a dated action plan and follow-up process.

INTERVIEWS

Besides satisfaction surveys, another invaluable means of obtaining family and resident feedback is to conduct a face-to-face interview. There are many resources available to help your facility develop a meaningful resident and family interview process.

Among them are the following Department of Health and Human Services Quality Indicator Surveys (QIS) scripts:

- Resident interview and observation: <http://www.hfam.org/docs/qis/stage1forms/CMS-20050.pdf>
- Family interview: <http://www.hfam.org/docs/qis/stage1forms/CMS-20049.pdf>

The intent of the QIS script is the person conducting the interview will read the questions verbatim, with little to no variance, and then record the answer. The feedback is much faster than returning a satisfaction questionnaire; and a secondary benefit is it helps the facility to better prepare for their QIS by remedying negative responses or initiating triggered investigations ahead of time.

An expressed, sincere interest by the facility in the thoughts and opinions of residents and family members will undoubtedly reduce conflict in the event there is an actual or perceived quality of care problem. Surveys and interviews will soften even the most strained relationships, as studies have shown families would not have complained to nurses and administrators so frequently or so harshly, "If they had only stopped and listened to them in the first place."

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