



Long-Term Care

REPORT

Your Essential Guide to Reimbursement, Business, Quality, & Risk Management

January 12, 2005
Vol. 7, No. 2, Pages 9-16

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CASE STUDY

Beef Up Your Training To Defang Tough Customers

➤ *Boost census, cut risk and improve care with this program for direct care workers.*

Ask any of the many nursing assistants who have been struck by a resident on the job: Providing great care isn't easy if you're not armed with knowledge.

"Very rarely do front-line workers receive any training on residents with problem behavior," asserts **David Lennox**, president of **Quality Behavioral Systems**, a consulting firm that works with long-term care facilities. "That makes it extremely difficult for them to do their jobs well."

Translation: Instead of workers applying themselves positively to caregiving, they are more likely to grow unmotivated, wind up on workers' comp, or worse — be driven to strike residents in return, leaving providers with huge liability risks.

If residents who lash out weigh down your staff, consider the strategies employed by this Massachusetts provider.

Who. At **Quaboag on the Common**, a not-for-profit facility in West Brookfield, MA, incident reports of worker injuries were one of the red flags that change was in order.

"We realized that resident violence was a big problem," reports administrator **Loren Salvietti**. Bites, scratches, strikes and wrist grabs weren't uncommon at the 141-bed facility — and regular audits of incident reports revealed that such problems were ongoing.

What They Do Well. Rather than stay the course and hope for

the best, Quaboag decided to arm staff with a new level of knowledge about residents' potential for violent and abusive behavior. Staffers attended small group training sessions with Lennox, becoming certified in the QBS Geri-Care program, which helps direct care workers defuse and manage troublesome or violent behavior by residents.

Based on research and Lennox's observations as former vice president for behavioral services at long-term care giant **Sun Healthcare**, the program schools staff in practical approaches to control situations that could trigger problem behaviors — and how to respond when a resident does strike out.

"The seminars teach staff how to approach residents, where to stand, how to speak, etc.," summarizes Salvietti.

Why It Pays. "Incident reports? I haven't seen one in a long time," quips Salvietti. The facility is seeing other positive results as well. For example, workers' comp costs are down since the staff received Geri-Care training.

Staff satisfaction — and improved performance — are added benefits. "We had a young woman working in activities for residents with dementia. Within a few weeks, she'd been punched twice by the same resident," recalls Salvietti. "Staff faced with challenges like can't be truly effective."

Preparing staff to contend with

problem behavior can also have a positive impact on census and staff turnover, asserts Lennox. "If your staff is prepared, you can accept the resident you might have turned away before as too great a challenge," he explains. "Or you may be able to keep a resident who otherwise might have to be discharged to a psychiatric setting."

How to make it work for you.

First, take stock of your own situation, advises Lennox. Red flags to watch for include high numbers of injury incident reports, high workers' comp claims and steep WC claims.

Red flag: Be sure to review medical records for emotionally laden progress notes, stresses Lennox. "If I see that a caregiver is perceiving a resident as 'manipulative,' for example, or that a worker is taking the problem behavior personally, that tells me that the staffer is probably not prepared," he explains. In addition to having big implications for care, such a situation could lead to survey problems and increased liability.

If trouble is brewing at your facility, find a qualified train in your area.

For information on alternatives Geri-Care, go to: www.QualityBehavioralInstitute.com/gc_features.html or call 866-429-9211.