

Surveyors Look At Patient Choices

New Guidance Targets Person-Centered Approaches, Dining

Federal surveyors will pay closer attention to how nursing facilities create a homelike environment for their residents, based on new Medicare guidance issued recently by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

From removing meal trays and changing overhead paging systems to giving residents more control over their daily schedules, the new guidance focuses on quality of life and environmental requirements, including what CMS called “a sharpened focus on resident rights.”

CMS realizes some facilities are further along than others in implementing culture change, but the guidelines can serve as a road map toward making changes.

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“Many facilities cannot immediately make these types of changes, but it should be a goal for all facilities that have not yet made these types of changes to work toward them,” according to the 46-page guidance.

“A nursing facility is not considered non-compliant if it still has some of these institutional features, but the facility is expected to do all it can within fiscal constraints to provide an environ-

ment that enhances quality of life for residents, in accordance with resident preferences.”

The surveyors will pay attention to things such as visitor access, choices offered in care and services, accommodating needs and preferences, and “ensuring they live with dignity,” according to the agency.

CMS Acting Administrator Charlene Frizzera called the revisions “ground-breaking” and a way to deinstitutionalize the atmosphere in nursing facilities.

“The improvements in the guidance are intended to support efforts under way to transform nursing homes into environments that are more like their homes through both environmental changes and resident-centered caregiving,” Frizzera said in a statement.

CMS emphasized that removing large nursing stations or making other physical changes is not enough.

The guidance will also look at how staff incorporate person-centered care that “emphasizes individualization, relationships, and a psychological environment that welcomes each resident and offers comfort.”

Beyond the personal care residents receive, their freedom of choice in everything from meal times, activities, baths, and deciding when to go to bed will also be considered.

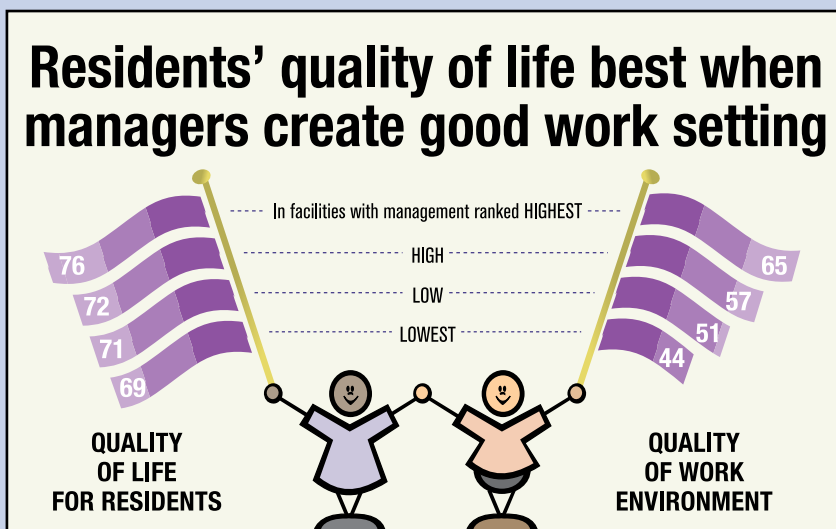
Surveyors will monitor whether residents are allowed to wear their own clothes or are kept in their night gowns.

The guidance also includes provisions that focus on whether staff members ignore residents and instead talk to each other during meals times or activities.

The guidance is available at CMS’ Web site at www.cms.hhs.gov/transmittals/downloads/R48SOMA.pdf.

—Suzanne Struglinski

By The Numbers



Facilities ranked by items related to management performance. “Quality of life” average scores based on resident responses of “Excellent” or “Good” to 12 survey items related to quality of life. “Quality of work environment” average scores based on employee responses of “Excellent” or “Good” to nine survey items related to the work environment.

Source: Skilled Nursing Resident and Employee Satisfaction Surveys conducted in 2008 by My InnerView.