

MACCC

Massachusetts Culture Change Coalition

CHANGING THE CULTURE OF LONG TERM CARE

News

SPRING 2011

We are proud to present MACCC's first newsletter. The theme, Consistent Caregivers, is a foundational practice for quality care in nursing homes, and a cornerstone of the Culture Change Movement.

The Massachusetts Culture Change Coalition (MACCC) is a voluntary, grassroots effort, and part of a national movement, to drive positive changes in long term care from institutional models to person-centered communities. The philosophy of culture change is to nurture the human spirit and promote a living environment where older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers can thrive.

To measure consistent staff assignments, the Advancing Excellence Campaign has introduced a measurement tool to determine how many different staff cares for each resident. To find this invaluable tool go to:

www.nhqualitycampaign.org

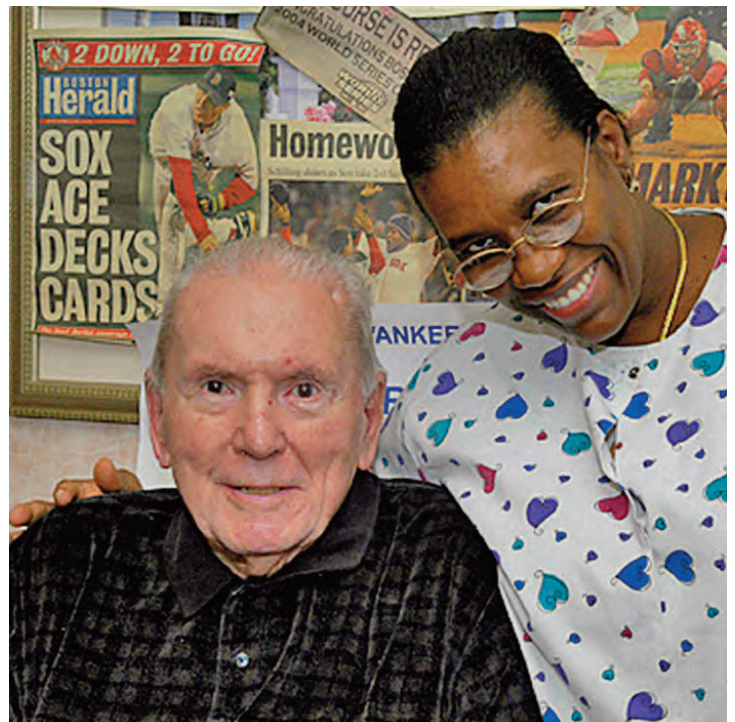
Click on Resources and then "By Goal" and move to Consistent Assignment. There are a number of resources there, including a WebEx on how to complete the consistent assignment measurement tool. Ultimately, it's a matter of thoughtfully reorganizing staff assignments to begin the quality improvement process to change lives for the better.

Why Switching to Consistent Caregivers Makes Sense

Imagine! In a nursing home with three eight hour shifts per day, it is possible that 21 different people could take care of a resident over the course of week. Just think about being dependent on 21 different people to help a resident eat, drink, bathe, dress, and go to the bathroom.

It's no wonder that recent literature is beginning to show that when the same person takes care of a resident, he/she suffers fewer pressure ulcers, fewer restraints and that both the resident and the staff feel more satisfied, because they have established a relationship.

Given the normal work routine, considering time-off, vacations and an occasional sick day, it appears to be possible to reduce the number of caregivers from 21 to about 8. This means assigning consistent, regular or permanent staff to each resident week after week, month after month.





A Family Member's Perspective

Joan Steiger described herself as a “twofer” in our discussion about consistent caregivers versus the hospital model of nursing home staffing. Joan has recovered from surgery in both types of facilities. Her mother, and now her aunt, was a resident of Loomis House, a residence that practices consistent caregiver assignments. As an attorney, Joan has a keen eye for detail and the quality of relationships. She is an avid advocate for the consistent caregiver model that serves the best interests of staff, residents and patients.

Joan believes that in order for caregivers to understand their impact on residents, it is important to train by reversing the roles, so both the good care and bad care are experienced and internalized. She pointed out that Loomis House has been on the “Culture Change Journey” for 13 years, and they continue to find ways to make improvements. As a bedridden resident in a traditional facility, Joan often found herself in an adversarial relationship with staff and social workers over such issues as when she was due to take a shower or not being included in her own care plan.

In contrast, at Loomis House staff went out of their way to meet her mother's needs and, subsequently, hers. Seeing a handful of the same people all the time, Joan explained, provides a sense of ease, friendship, trust, humor and wellbeing. An excerpt from Joan's favorite anecdote says it all. “...My mother was a resident in the dementia-special care unit of Loomis House Nursing Center in Holyoke for over 3 years. Prior to surgery, I had to stay away from Mother because a number of people there had colds, Mother forgot who I was and transferred her motherly love to her favorite caregivers. When I returned, I watched as they accepted and returned her affection in the most natural and heartwarming way. Seeing how they cared for Mother brought tears to my eyes.”

A Resident's View

Mary Gaudet has lived at the Park Avenue Nursing and Rehabilitation Center for just over three years. After breaking her hip, Mary's family checked out facilities where she might receive the help she needed. They were familiar with Park Avenue, as her brother-in law had been a resident there. Using consistent caregivers was instituted shortly before Mary's arrival.

Having the same caregivers, Mary says, makes the residents and the staff more relaxed and confident about doing a good job. She pointed out that staff seems to stay and that, as a result, relationships are formed which are meaningful to both groups.

Mary told me that she knows that she is not the only person who needs help, so she tries not to wait until the last minute to ask for assistance when she needs to get out of bed. However, she is confident that someone she knows will come to help her, even if she has to wait a bit. After all, she told me, she's not the only one who might need assistance.

In all, Mary seemed to be pleased with the setting, with the variety of activities offered and with the care she receives. She is particularly fond of book and news discussion groups. Mary pushes herself to attend a variety of activities, because she knows that she will enjoy them as well as being with others — both staff and residents.





Liz mentioned that the staff and residents become a “family”— that even if a resident is unable to speak, she, as the caregiver, can pinpoint even the slightest change, which translates into better care.

Liz further explained that before consistent caregivers, “Nurses had all the responsibility and too much on their plates. Now, with better communication, respect, and trust between the nurses and CNAs, the care of residents is a shared responsibility.” As a Senior CNA, Liz is currently a Neighborhood Coordinator, meaning that she supervises other CNA staff.

Given how well staff and residents come to know each other, Liz noted that residents know immediately if one of the staff is unhappy or upset, even if he/she tries to hide it with a cheerful facade. Once, upon returning from vacation, a nonverbal resident wheeled herself up to Liz and tapped her on the leg as if to say, “Where have you been...”

Asked if a CNA expresses concern about the change to the consistent caregiver model, Liz responded with, “Try it!” She also acknowledged that sometimes staff needs to work together to make consistent caregiver assignments a win-win for both residents and staff.

A Caregiver’s Point of View

In a telephone interview about consistent caregivers with Liz Diaz, job satisfaction, creativity and caring nearly leaped through the telephone.

Liz Diaz, of Loomis House in Holyoke, has been a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) for 15 years. With two small children to care for, she wanted a job that would utilize her naturally compassionate nature to care for people.

For her first two years as a CNA, under the “old” system, Liz explained that she would come in each morning and be told by the supervising nurse on which hall/unit she was assigned and to rouse residents and get them to breakfast. Following the morning meal, she would be given her assignment for the day—and it could be different each day.

For the past 13 years at Loomis House, with the change to the consistent caregiver model, Liz and her co-workers are assigned to a “neighborhood” and take care of the same residents each day.



Culture Change: Getting a “Buy In”

Change is difficult for most people. Multiply that factor into institutional change, and it has the potential to be daunting. Talking to Bill Graves, the administrator of St. Camillus Health Center in Whitinsville, illustrated the importance of getting staff “buy in” into change to make it a positive ground swell — not a top down edict.

It was decided that a move to consistent staff assignments made sense in the natural progression of providing outstanding personal care for residents. Interestingly, Bill told me that they decided to implement the new assignment model on the unit with the most vocal staff. The staff reacted with a collective “no,” and the administration went back to the drawing board.

Next came a series of monthly educational programs for all the staff over a period of nine months. Each session was offered six or seven times, so that each person had the opportunity to attend, and each session had some component of education around culture change and consistent care.

The administration then went back to the staff on the unit that had turned down the idea and proposed introducing a “Gentle Awakening” program. This translated into letting each resident get up and have breakfast on his/her own schedule. A week later, the staff approached the administration asking to institute the consistent caregiver model. To make the new model work, staff, resident, and family committees were formed with each group having a stake in the success of the model.

If he had to do it again, Bill would have all the stakeholders meet at the same time to hear the same message to ensure trust and alleviate misconceptions. Creating a ground swell to make the culture change was important to its success. The bottom line is that a program of consistent caregivers works, is more economical, and creates greater satisfaction with each group of stakeholders – staff, residents and families.

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Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Long Term Care Ombudsman
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