



NEWS & VIEWS

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In This Issue:

Addressing the Complexity and Various Aspects of Communication Involving Direct Care Staff in the Nursing Home Environment

Are You Prepared? Patient Driven Payment Model (PDPM) Effective October 1, 2019

Countdown Feature Added to Client Daily Alerts

"Avoid Fraud Errors ... Learn How From Med-Net Compliance's Avoidance Courses"



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Addressing the Complexity and Various Aspects of Communication Involving Direct Care Staff in the Nursing Home Environment

By:
Louise Lindsey, Editor

The Five Love Languages, by Dr. Gary Chapman, is a book about how people communicate love to each other, but it provides a good scenario for understanding that communication involves more than just speaking to another person. The premise of the book is that every person has a kind of decoding mechanism (a love language) through which they both receive and send messages intended to express feelings of love. The five love languages talked about are: touch, gift-giving, words of affirmation, acts of service, and spending time.

Dr. Chapman explains it like this-

John loves Jane and sends her all kinds of gifts (flowers, candy, jewelry) which is his way of showing her how much he loves her. Jane, on the other hand, smiles and is not unhappy to receive the gifts, but she is just not getting the feeling that John really loves her. The problem lies in the fact that Jane's love language is words of affirmation. She wants John to tell her how pretty and intelligent she is, and what a great job she did on producing the play for the community theater. In effect, they are not speaking the same love language. Likewise, John doesn't believe that Jane feels the same level of affection he feels because all she does is tell him how much she admires his ability to accomplish the various things he does, e.g., coaching the girls' basketball team and working on Habitat for Humanity. While the pair knows, on some level, that there is shared affection, the depth of Jane's affection for John doesn't come through until Jane starts making and giving John those raisin-filled cookies that he loves, and John starts telling Jane how much he admires the work she does and how attractive she is.

The concept of communication is a multi-faceted, complex phenomenon in whatever setting you place it, and the nursing home environment provides its own unique set of challenges that might be construed as having to speak different languages in order to have effective communication.

To address the need for better communication, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has mandated some significant changes that require nursing homes to implement effective communication training for direct care staff by November 28, 2019.

An obvious starting point for implementing effective communication training aimed at direct care staff is to determine the scope of the requirement. It is quickly discovered that this project has many layers and facets to it. But as the old adage asks and answers, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!" The challenge is not just that the task requires addressing many communication pieces, the time-clock for doing so is ticking.

Where to Begin

Some primary communication areas where nursing home direct care staff should receive training involve-

- Communication with residents and families
- Communication with supervising staff, and
- Communication about Compliance Issues.

It should be noted that studies have shown that more effective communication by nursing home staff correlates directly to the residents experiencing a higher quality of life, decreased verbal and physical aggression, and less depression.

Studies have also shown that communication skills training can improve CNAs communication with the residents, but the downside to providing communication skills training to CNAs is that it is difficult to implement and tends to be time consuming. One controlled group study, however, reported success by individually training CNAs to communicate effectively with residents during morning care. CNAs were taught to use-

- Short instructions,
- Positive speech, and
- Biographical statements.

The results were that the CNAs experienced less caregiver distress, and the ability of the CNAs to use short instructions and instances of positive speech increased along with the comfort of the CNAs in doing those things.

Major challenges for CNAs in communicating with residents are the communication disabilities that are common with older persons. One survey on this subject looked at communication changes in 12,000 Medicare beneficiaries aged 65 or older. What the survey discovered was that 42% reported having hearing problems, 26% had difficulty writing, and 6% had problems using the telephone. When you factor in declining cognitive ability, language, and cultural barriers, the communication skills challenge grows significantly.

Other considerations regarding the communication challenges facing CNAs are language, culture, and intellectual capability of the CNAs themselves. For a number of CNAs, English is a second language, and reading and comprehension levels may be more on a third-grade level than the 8th-grade level of many written materials.

Here are some suggestions that CNAs might find helpful in communicating with residents who have difficulty communicating their needs and wants.

- **Knock, Announce, Approach** - knock on the door, call the resident by name, and introduce yourself.
- **Conversation** - keep conversation brief and to the point.
- **Use Simple Direct Questions** - ask yes or no questions like, "Are you comfortable, hungry, happy." Use a respectful, adult tone. If speech is difficult, ask the resident to nod or shake their head for yes or no. Or, if needed, ask the resident to blink their eyes once for yes and twice for no.
- **Allow the resident time to respond.**
- **Use whatever communication tools will work** - note pads and pens, flash cards, pointing, picture boards, etc.
- **Repeat back to the resident what you think they want as simply as you can.**
- **Allow enough time to have a complete conversation.**
- **Encourage your resident to use every means to communicate their needs to you** - objects, pictures, words.
- **Attitude** - keeping your attitude light, relaxed, and pleasant without conveying that you are in a hurry or frustrated will make communication easier.
- **Make the resident aware that you are leaving** - they should be clean and safe, with their call button close by, and other needed items and water within their reach.

Importance of Developing Active Listening Skills

One of the most important aspects in effective communication training is the role that "active listening" plays. Here are some tips from EruptingMind.com to improve active listening skills:

- Look and listen
- Listen without interrupting
- Pause before replying
- Match the tempo of the speaker's voice
- Repeat what the speaker says
- Ask questions for clarification
- Don't argue
- Listen to the content
- Practice reflective listening
- Summarize the main issue.

Some of the benefits of improving one's listening skills include the following :

- Encourages the other person to keep talking.
- Corrects misunderstandings, false assumptions, and misinterpretations.
- Reassures the speaker that you are listening.
- Gives a much deeper insight into the needs of a person.
- Helps you to remember what was said.
- Builds rapport and mutual respect.
- Demonstrates good listening skills.
- Shows good communication skills.

Communicating Compliance Information to Direct Care Staff

Training direct care staff about the many aspects of federal compliance regulations and their role in a nursing home's compliance and ethics program is vitally important. Direct care staff are on the "front line" when it comes to compliance and the incidents that result in violations of those regulations.

How compliance information is communicated to direct care staff must be done in consideration of all the barriers (language, education, etc.) that may make it difficult for these staff members to comprehend and relate to their role in compliance.

One of Med-Net's resources that may be helpful is the [Fraud Compliance Manual: Module 2 - Reporting and Communicating](#). After watching this presentation, the viewer should be able to explain the principles of the compliance reporting system and know how to handle requests from outside sources for information. It should be remembered, whether seeking to learn new/better communication skills or when in the act of communicating, it is not only your words that communicate to your audience. Your body language has a message of its own, and it may be sending an entirely different message than your words convey. Poor vocabulary can be a distraction to an important idea, and if your body language conveys to the listener impatience or arrogance, they may well turn off your verbal message.

Here is the challenge-effective communication must be offered in a way that can be properly interpreted by direct care staff with varying backgrounds and educational levels.

Are You Prepared?

Patient Driven Payment Model (PDPM) Effective October 1, 2019

Whether Your Rehabilitation Services Are Contracted Or In-House Med-Net Rehabilitation Solutions, LLC Can Help With:

* **Training on PDPM** - Your staff will have greater understanding of how PDPM will affect day-to-day clinical operations. Your staff will be able to identify what preparations will be needed in moving forward during transition to the new payment system.

* **Analysis of RUG IV vs PDPM**- A review of current Case Mix Status will be completed. This review will compare the current RUG IV classification to the new PDPM classification system.

* **Independent assessment of current Therapy program**- This assessment will assist you identifying how to

prepare and strengthen your therapy program in preparation for transition to the new PDPM system. Additionally, the assessment will assist you in understanding new areas of program development that may be necessary to capture appropriate reimbursement for quality of care delivery under the new model.

* **Customized plans and implementation for success-** Med-Net Rehabilitation Solutions partners with clients to create customized plans for success.

* **Ongoing coaching and program support-** Med-Net Rehabilitation Solutions is committed to your success and is able to provide ongoing review of your facility's program performance.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Rona Wiedmayer MA., CCC-SLP, President
Med-Net Rehabilitation Solutions, LLC
P: (609) 454-5020 / F: (609) 454-5518
Cell: (862) 266-0419

Countdown Feature Added to Client Daily Alerts

Hopefully you have noticed the "Countdown to November 28,2019" feature at the bottom of our Daily Alerts. It serves as a constant reminder that CMS REQUIRED PHASE 3 includes the need for a Compliance and Ethics Program for nursing homes.

Starting on November 28th of this year state surveyors will be asking to see and/or review your Compliance and Ethics Program. F-Tags will be issued by the surveyors if evidence of a program is not available.

If you need help in meeting the deadline for having a Compliance and Ethics Program in place please contact Justine Fedorchak, Director of Client Relations at jfedorchak@mednetconcepts.com

"Avoid Fraud Errors ... Learn How From Med-Net Compliance's Avoidance Courses"

Jo Ann Halberstadter, Esq

ADMINISTRATORS TAKE NOTE

Med-Net Compliance, LLC now offers two series of fraud modules with NAB/NCERS CEs on our website. Modules 1-8 offers 3 NAB CEs and modules 9-16 offer 3.75 CEs. All modules provide education on fraud, waste and abuse prevention and offer a combined total of 6.75 CEs for successful completion.

To review the NAB Accredited courses visit our website:

<https://www.mednetcompliance.com/med-net-academy/nab-accredited-courses/>

All 16 courses on fraud, waste and abuse were developed by Betty Frandsen, our Vice President of Professional Development and her staff.

Med-Net Concepts, LLC Affiliates

[Med-Net Compliance, LLC](#)

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STAY CONNECTED



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