Volume VIII

Preserving Residents’ Dignity

Facilitator Guide
WHY IT’S IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE RESIDENTS’ DIGNITY

Throughout the nation staff members in long term care facilities are becoming more attuned to the many issues relating to quality of life. We’re learning that preserving and promoting a rich quality of life for residents is just as important as providing outstanding quality of care.

Research studies, surveyor findings and casual observation are all confirming a crucial point - that a positive sense of dignity is the most noticeable contributor to a resident’s quality of life.

Time and again, when asked how they like life in the facility, residents respond with comments relating to dignity issues. They talk about how self-sufficient they are or not. They give countless examples of how their freedom of choice is either upheld or restricted. They discuss their need for privacy and their desire to be treated with respect. Many residents, who find themselves dependent on others for the first time in their adult lives, speak longingly of a time when their self-image was stronger and their right to self-determination was unquestioned.

By preparing to conduct this learning session you are taking an important step toward making the preservation of dignity a priority in your facility. This facilitator’s guide will help you plan for and conduct your sessions, and guide you as you help staff members become pro-active guardians of residents’ self-esteem and self-worth.
VIEWING GUIDELINES

“Preserving Residents’ Dignity” is a video-based learning program developed specifically for staff members in long-term care facilities. When thoughtfully conducted, this learning effort can have a positive impact on every member of the caregiving team:

- Staff members will learn the many ways in which their behavior either supports or detracts from residents’ feelings of dignity. They’ll discover that preserving residents’ dignity can positively impact their relationships with residents, and actually make many care tasks easier and more enjoyable.
- Residents will feel more positive about themselves and about life in your facility. They will move closer to maximizing their own potential, whatever that potential may be.
- Family members feel confident that their loved one is receiving high-quality care and attention. What’s more, family members may experience improvement in their relationship with the resident because of the resident’s higher degree of overall satisfaction.

The “Preserving Residents’ Dignity” program should be conducted for:

- All members of your nursing staff
- All members of support staffs who have direct or indirect contact with residents, such as personnel who work in social services, admissions, dietary, maintenance, etc.
- Every newly hired member of your staff
- Every volunteer who works in your facility
PROGRAM CONTENT

The issue of dignity can be hard to define - in fact, dignity may mean different things to different people. That’s why it’s so important to include in your session time for group discussion. Your discussion will give participants an opportunity to talk through their feelings about preserving dignity, to identify staff behaviors which enhance dignity, and to find ways to eliminate behaviors which destroy resident dignity.

During your session you’ll focus on:

- The definition of dignity and its impact on residents’ quality of life
- How residents describe their everyday lives regarding the presence or absence of dignity
- The five categories of dignity which most affect residents’ feelings of self-esteem and self-worth
- Specific behaviors staff members can practice to enhance a resident’s sense of dignity
SAMPLE GROUP SESSION AGENDA

Following is a sample agenda you may wish to use when conducting your “Preserving Residents’ Dignity” session.

Length of videotaped program: approximately 17 minutes

Suggested length of session: 45 to 60 minutes

Materials needed:

• This facilitator’s guide
• The “Preserving Residents’ Rights” video program
• Optional paper and pencils for participant note-taking
• Optional flipchart and markers for writing key ideas
SUGGESTED SESSION AGENDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Allotment Content</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Welcome the group to your session. Introduce the “Preserving Dignity” topic by leading this discussion:</td>
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|        | **ASK:** How would you define “dignity”?  
(Write on a flipchart the key words mentioned, if desired. Participants will learn from the upcoming video that “dignity” refers to a person’s sense of self-worth and self-esteem) |
|        | **ASK:** Can you remember a time when one or more of these qualities was taken away from you? What happened? How did that make you feel?  
(Encourage participants to share their personal experiences)                                                              |
|        | **SAY:** Maintaining a sense of dignity is important to all of us. As adults, we feel we’ve earned the right to dignity - and we’re correct to feel that way.  
This right to dignity is just as valid for residents in our facility. And a sense of dignity may even be more important to them as it is to us. |
ASK: Why do you think that’s so? (Pause for responses, which may include: failing health, a community setting, the need to follow medical or facility rules...all these issues can threaten a resident’s feelings of dignity.)

ASK: Imagine yourself at an advanced age, whatever you think that age might be. If you were living a “dignified old age”, what would that look like? (Encourage group input.)

SAY: Many of the qualities you mentioned are the same qualities of life that residents in our facility want for themselves. The question is, do we help them achieve a dignified life? Or do we sometimes act in a way that unintentionally robs residents of their dignity?

SAY: These are the questions we’re going to examine as we watch the following video program. During this program you’ll hear how residents describe their lives in a facility, and you’ll see how the way we interact with them affects their sense of dignity.

Let’s watch.
17 min  Show video program

15 min  Engage viewers in a brief discussion of what they’ve just seen. If group members are slow to respond, consider giving a brief recap of the main ideas emphasized in the video (or the key situations and behaviors with which you feel your group can most easily relate to).

To facilitate discussion, you may consider asking questions like...
  •  How would you rate our current success at preserving residents’ dignity?
    In what areas are we most successful?

5 min  In closing, ask for questions or additional comments from the group. Discuss as appropriate.

Thank group members for their participation and conclude the session.
Questions?

If you have questions about how to implement the “Preserving Residents’ Dignity” program, or if you would like information about other programs available from ElderCare Communications, call or write to:

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Fax: 513-742-6262

or check online at:

www.eldercarecomm.com

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