

A SURVEYOR'S PERSPECTIVE

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Coming from a surveyor's viewpoint, here are a few issues regarding our role in providing meaningful activities to the precious residents in our care.

Do you go home each night feeling you were able to meet your residents' individual activity needs? Do you feel "on top" of providing one-to-one attention to those residents needing it? Or do you feel you never can keep up? Our job is very difficult. When there is only one of us to perhaps 30 - 50 residents, how can we possibly meet each of our residents' needs every day, every week?

Do we really go to bat for our residents or do we simply accept it when we are told there is no budget for more professional activity staffing? Federal F Tag 248 states that there shall be an ongoing program of activities for *each* resident designed to meet his individual interests. Can you honestly say you provide this level of care? Do you make a case for more staff so you CAN meet this requirement? Or do you take on more responsibility when asked or show what will have to go undone if you accept a new responsibility? Do you stand up for your residents and stand up to your administrator?

Have you worked the numbers? Do you know the number of residents who require different levels of your involvement? For instance, who is independent, partially dependent, and totally dependent? Have you delineated how much time you will dedicate to each resident? Do you know how much time each week you have for true activity programming time, not including meetings, errands, or even transporting? Do you have control over your services according to the time you've been budgeted or is it simply "hit or miss"?

As a surveyor and Activity Professional, I contend there is not enough staff to truly meet residents' needs. Most of you will agree.

Let's look at typical weekend activity staffing patterns. Do you have less staff scheduled on weekends? If so, why? Are residents' needs and interests less intense on the weekends? Admittedly, some residents have family visits during this time, but do they all have them? On all weekends? Not usually. Many residents state they are bored on weekends as well, and it seems that an increasing number of residents desire more to do in the evening hours (especially younger residents).

Another phenomenon I see is an undignified offering of some activities. Is ball toss appropriate for 80 to 90-year-old elders? It seems and sounds undignified. Instead, perhaps we need to offer a great exercise class that encompasses a variety of exercises, such as tossing a ball, but let's call it exercise class or something equally classy and suitable.

Think about it: When we are 80 or 90, will it mean anything to us that we have a care plan goal to attend three activities a week? Will we care?

If you review F Tag 279 regarding the requirement for a comprehensive care plan, you will see something incredible in the second paragraph. (Many don't realize there is a second paragraph since it is on the next page.) It states that we have to identify the services that will be provided to assist each resident to attain or maintain his/her highest practicable level of mental, physical, and psychosocial well-being. A goal to attend a certain number of activities per week does not speak to a person's highest practicable level of well-being.

During each care conference, study each resident and think about and inquire of other staff and family members what that resident's highest practicable level is. With assistance, avid golfers can often still play. Many people with dementia can still enjoy long term memory skills such as

reading or playing the piano. The resident who “dusts” with her hands can be given a cloth in order to make her movements meaningful. Better yet, can she officially clean with the housekeeper who comes to the secured unit every day? Why can’t she wash windows with supervision? These questions help us identify a resident’s highest practicable level which is at the heart of what we do and does not require a certain number of activities each week.

Lastly, one should never have to “get ready” for a survey because a facility agrees to and should meet the federal and state regulations at all times. Instead, study the regulations, know them, and look around you every day through the eyes of a surveyor.

Carmen has been a surveyor in Colorado for over 9 years surveying nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and adult day programs. She recently accepted an offer she could not refuse with a nursing home and assisted living management company, Pinon Management. They invited her to be the Associate Director of Life Enhancement and Culture Change Coordinator. In these roles, she will teach and train facility staff about the rapidly spreading culture change movement and serve as the company’s Activity Consultant. Carmen has also started her own business, Edu-catering: Catering Education for Compliance and Culture Change in LTC consulting, teaching, and speaking about Regulatory Compliance and Culture Change, Survey Process: How to be Your Own Surveyor, Quality of Life and Meaningful Activities, and can be reached at Eduatering@yahoo.com. CF