STAFF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SHIFTS

Improvement Recommendations

The quality of communication is particularly important in settings like nursing homes and assisted living which have high levels of task interdependence, uncertainty and time constraints.

*Outcomes for residents are shaped by the effectiveness of coordination and communication among staff. This communication depends on the quality of the underlying relationships...for example, relationships between CNA’s, nurses and food service staff can affect how easily a resident can have an alternate meal or mealtime.*

1. Conduct the drill down survey with your staff to determine what aspects of communication between shifts appear to be lacking and which caused them to give a poor score on this question.
   - This will give you great insights into the type of information they feel they need to deliver quality care to their residents.

2. Conflicts often occur between shifts over work that is perceived to be not accomplished. When staff run in and out at shift change, they do not have the opportunity to make a smooth hand-off, and on-coming staff can be resentful of the work left to them by those going off shift.
   - Having staff make rounds together during a change of shift overlap can mitigate any conflicts.
   - If it is absolutely impossible to have all the staff overlap, have one lead caregiver “collect” information from the staff and stay to share it with the staff of the next shift.
   - Having staff eavesdrop on the nurses giving report is not an acceptable change of shift communication process.
   - Lack of overlap creates costly errors.
   - When new employees join a staff that communicates and works well together it is more likely that they will have a good experience and stay.

3. Share not only medical information but discuss the resident’s experience during the day (e.g. their mood, cognition and functional ability.)
   - This is especially important to catch changes which could lead to rehospitalizations.
   - Hone in on ways you have found to avoid risk and promote improvement.

4. Take time to discuss any new residents that have come to the neighborhood/unit. Share information about:
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- Their admission process
- Daily routine including likes and dislikes (e.g. 4 creamers rather than 2 etc.)
- Personal history and family
- Personality
- Ways you have learned to support their well-being

5. Share information with departments interfacing with the resident so everyone is working from the “same page” (e.g. housekeeping, maintenance, dietary, activities.)
   - Each member of a department learns things about the resident that all caregivers could utilize to provide the best care possible.
   - Opportunities should be found for all to share and change of shift is a good time for such information sharing.
   - This can also be an opportunity to share information about things that are working and not working:
     - The time that the trash is picked up results in overflowing cans.
     - Staff misuse of equipment may cause it to be broken and not usable - maintenance can share information at change of shift or pick up information about broken equipment, helping to identify practices which result in its being out of use.
     - Dietary can benefit by ensuring the way change of diet orders are transmitted to their department results in a timely and correct response.

6. Use survey data to better understand the employee experience:
   - New Hire Survey- gather the first impressions in the first 30 days of employment and feedback on orientation and training. This allows you to quickly address any issues.
   - Employee Commitment Survey- to understand the level of employee engagement.
   - Employee Exit Survey- to learn why employees leave.
   - Drill down Surveys - to gather insight into why employees scored items on the employee survey the way that they did. These surveys can be used in focus groups as discussion points or to distribute for individual feedback.

References:

*Meeting the Leadership Challenge in Long-Term Care: What You Do Matters*” by Farrell, Brady and Frank.

Shift Report is the most important meeting of the day in a Long Term Care Organization. We have participated in and witnessed shift interchanges in a variety of long term care and hospital settings over the past 40 years. It has been an interesting journey in best and worst practices of communication. The best practices shared in this article are aimed at improving communication and teamwork between shifts and even departments.

The method of communication and what information is shared at shift exchange can vary extensively even within the same facility. Nurses share with nurses who may or may not share with CNAs. CNAs may or may not communicate with each other directly as the staff transitions from one shift to the next. There is usually not a well organized method of getting information to team members in other departments. The Nurses as leaders need to remember they set the tone for the entire shift. Nurses need to see through the shift to get the desired results for the residents and staff. Here then, are 7 Strategies for Successful Shift Interchange.

Strategy #1. Shift Report is given in-person and includes Front Line Staff
Strategy #2. Start on time with all required attendees present
Strategy #3. The team records attendance and tardiness daily at start time
Strategy #4. Set an agenda and put a time limit on each agenda item
Strategy #5. Use 7-Day Rolling Logs to drive report
Strategy #6. Plan for Shift Overlap
Strategy #7. Y’all Come!

Additional and abundant resources can be found by putting “improving communication between shifts” into your search engine.