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Nursing Care Center Spotlight

AFRH vision proves, ‘There's no place like Home’
The Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) is a continuous care retirement community caring for more than 1,000 veterans at its Washington, D.C. and Gulfport, Mississippi locations. Services include independent living, assisted living, and long term care with a separate memory support area. InTouch spoke with Karen W. Tillman-McCombs, D.D.S., acting chief, Healthcare Services, and performance improvement officer, about the AFRH service philosophy and how Joint Commission accreditation helps them fulfill their vision of “person-center care.”

What is the vision at AFRH? We are committed to fostering independence, vitality and wellness for veterans, making it a vibrant place in which to live, work and thrive. We do this by providing “person-centered care.” This concept recognizes that AFRH residents are active participants in guiding
and charting their own lives. This requires our staff to identify and understand each resident’s individual needs, listen carefully to the resident’s expressed needs, and to offer smart choices for consideration.

How does Joint Commission Nursing Care Center accreditation help AFRH fulfill this vision? The new standards provide a framework by which AFRH leadership and staff can ensure that care is of the highest quality and accountability. Additionally, the standards helped us to align our processes in a manner that stand up against any changes in staff membership or leadership. All staff are trained in risk assessment and management in a proactive manner. For example, everyone participates in assessing the environment for infection prevention and control through the IC standards and using the Hand Hygiene Targeted Solutions Tool®.

How did your staff prepare for the survey? We started our preparation with an operational assessment (mock survey) to determine how our performance compared to the standards. Once we identified our strengths and weaknesses, we divided into teams to learn the standards and address the areas that we did not already cover adequately. Most of our staff did not have previous Joint Commission experience, so our challenge was to make the culture change associated with aligning our practices with the language and expectations expressed in the standards.

Were the surveyors’ comments and guidance helpful? The staff and AFRH leadership were very energized and excited at the end of the survey. It was clear that our hard work had paid off. Floor staff were eager to be questioned by the surveyors. Those who were not picked to participate in the tracers were disappointed that they didn’t get a chance to demonstrate their level of preparation. We feel the survey gave us a good foundation for growth and a platform for organizational performance improvement.

Resident safety

Free e-learning module aims to reduce infections in long term care settings
An innovative online educational module that shows how to apply the principles of high reliability to reducing infections in long term care settings is available for free from The Joint Commission. The centerpiece of the project is a 50-minute e-learning tool, Applying High Reliability Principles to the Prevention and Control of Infections in Long Term Care, which includes examples, quizzes, discussion questions and other resources for nursing home and assisted living staff to learn and test their knowledge about high reliability in health care. The learning module can be viewed all at once or in two parts and is recommended for all staff levels in a long term care facility – from the environmental services staff to the administrator. Participants will learn about:

- Characteristics of high reliability health care
- How infection prevention and control practices in long term care can incorporate high reliability principles
- How to take a systems approach to preventing errors related to infection prevention and control
- Ways to apply the concepts of high reliability to infection prevention in their organization

Partially funded through a conference grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the online module also includes a searchable index of resources and links to other sources of information.

Be vigilant about environmental hazards that affect patient and resident safety
The Joint Commission requires nursing care centers to conduct environment of care (EC) tours every six months in patient care and resident living areas, and every year in non-patient care areas. These tours help organizations identify improvement opportunities and help EC professionals spot safety hazards. However, it is not the only time staff should be on the lookout for safety hazards. The table below lists
frequently occurring safety hazards in the EC and provides strategies for eliminating the hazards and maintaining a safe environment.

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<th>Problem area</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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| Propped-open doors            | To help with air flow, ventilation, or temperature control, staff prop open a door. Most doors that open onto a corridor must be self-closing and remain closed at all times to separate the corridor from the room in case of fire. | • Evaluate the effectiveness of the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) system. Confirm that the system is functioning as designed. It is possible that the system needs additional controls to meet the occupants' needs.  
• For doors that can be kept open, install a magnetic "hold open" device interfaced with the fire alarm system. In case of fire, the magnetic connection is severed, and the door closes automatically, protecting the room's occupants. |
| Space heaters                 | Since space heaters increase fire risk, they are prohibited in patient and resident sleeping and treatment areas (which includes the nurses’ station). | • Perform a detailed evaluation of your HVAC system to see if performance can be enhanced throughout the facility.  
• Not using space heaters is the safest course of action, but space heaters are allowed in an office – such as a nurse manager's office – which is separated from all sleeping and treatment areas by a door or wall. |
| Lighting                      | A burned-out light bulb in an exit sign can be a significant safety hazard. | • The Joint Commission requires organizations to have two-bulb exit fixtures so that the loss of one bulb will not leave an area in total darkness.  
• Assess lighting conditions at various times to gauge whether lighting is suitable for the activities taking place. If lighting levels are not sufficient, explore ways to add lighting.  
• Ask staff and residents about their perceptions of lighting to see if there are any concerns about light level and intensity. |
| Cleaning                      | Accumulation of dust, dirt, and potential microbial contaminants on and under environmental surfaces serves as a potential reservoir for microorganisms. | • Routine environmental cleaning is necessary to maintain a standard of overall organizational cleanliness. There are requirements, established by government regulation and guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), for maintaining the cleanliness of the environment.  
• Each health care organization must have and follow written policies and procedures for environmental cleaning. |
| Odors from trash or cleaning products may be offensive to residents, patients and staff. | Have processes in place for limiting and managing odors.  
• Check that these processes are consistently followed.  
• Empty trash more frequently or at different times. | |
| In order to clean, housekeeping staff may raise alarm pulls, display wet floor signs, open drawers, or in other ways alter the environment so that it is not ready for use. | Train housekeeping staff to return the environment to a "ready" state.  
• Check that these processes are consistently followed. | |
| Lack of responsibility for environmental risks | Staff members ignore spills and other hazards. | • Ensuring a safe environment requires commitment from all staff. When such a commitment is present, an organization can foster an environment that supports the best possible care for patients. |

**Resources**

**R3 Report explains new memory care accreditation requirements for nursing care centers**

This summer, The Joint Commission released an **R3 Report on new memory care requirements** that apply to all organizations accredited under the **Nursing Care Center Accreditation** program. The new requirements focus on the care of residents with memory-impacting conditions such as Alzheimer’s disease or dementia. The **R3 Report** provides accredited health care organizations and interested health care professionals in-depth information about the rationale and references that were employed in the development of the new memory care requirements. **Note: The accreditation requirements are distinct from those required for the Memory Care Certification option.**

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Gina Zimmermann, M.S., executive director, Nursing Care Center Accreditation program  
Pamela Schumacher, M.S., editor
Look for us
Joint Commission staff members will be at the following meetings and conventions:
- December 5, American College of Health Care Administrators Winter Marketplace, Chandler, Arizona

Ebola Preparedness Resources Web page includes program-specific standards
The Joint Commission has launched a new Ebola Preparedness Resources section on its website that contains links to newsletters, blogs, podcasts, articles, publications, and other resources focused on Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). One of the documents is a table highlighting standards by accreditation program related to infection control and emergency management for Ebola situations.

New on the web
- 2015 National Patient Safety Goals:
  - Nursing Care Center
  - Long Term Care (Medicare/Medicaid)
- New standards BoosterPak on waived testing: A new Standards BoosterPak™ on waived testing is available. BoosterPaks are available to Joint Commission accredited and certified organizations on the secure Joint Commission Connect Extranet. BoosterPaks are searchable documents that provide detailed information about a single standard or topic area that has been associated with a high volume of inquiries or non-compliance scores. BoosterPaks help accredited organizations improve the understanding and consistency of standard interpretation.
- Free webinar replays:
  - Joint Commission Accreditation and Specialty Certification for Your Nursing Care Center: The Pathway to Achieving and Sustaining Performance Excellence, Video replay | View slideshow
  - Joint Commission Reinvents its Long Term Care Accreditation Program – What This Means for Our Nursing Home Customers, Video replay | View slideshow
  - New Ways to Boost Your Position in the Market, Video replay | View slideshow
  - Accreditation and Specialty Certification To Grow Your Business, Video replay | View slideshow