Advancing Excellence
in America's Nursing Homes

Implementation Guide:

Goal 8: Improving Consistent Assignment of Nursing Home Staff

This Implementation Guide provides efficient, consistent, evidence-based approaches to increasing consistent assignment of nursing home staff.

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ADVANCING EXCELLENCE IN AMERICA'S NURSING HOMES

A Campaign to Improve Quality of Life for Residents and Staff

Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes is a coalition based, two-year campaign that launched in September 2006. The campaign is reinvigorating efforts to improve the quality of care and quality of life for those living or recuperating in America's nursing homes.

The campaign's unprecedented coalition includes long-term care providers, caregivers, medical and quality improvement experts, government agencies, consumers and others. Together, we are building on the success of other quality initiatives, including Quality First, the Nursing Home Quality Initiative (NHQI), the culture change movement, and other quality initiatives.

Founding Organizations:

Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordinators
American College of Healthcare Administrators
American Health Care Association
American Medical Directors Association
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and its contractors, the Quality Improvement Organizations
National Association of Health Care Assistants
National Citizen's Coalition for Nursing Home Reform
National Commission for Quality Long-Term Care
The Commonwealth Fund
The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society

Goal 8: Improving Consistent Assignment of Nursing Home Staff

Goal 8: Being regularly cared for by the same caregiver is critical to quality of care and quality of life. To maximize quality as well as resident and staff relationships, the majority of nursing homes will employ "consistent assignment".

Objectives – By September 2008:

a) One-third of nursing homes will have adopted "consistent assignment" among CNAs.

b) 5,300 nursing homes will have adopted "consistent assignment" among CNAs.

ICON KEY
↶ Recognition/Assessment
⚲ Cause Identification
✕ Management
⊞ Monitoring

The icons in the box to the left will be used throughout this guide to help identify those processes related to key evidence-based approaches.

Approach to Implementation

A nursing home working to increase consistent assignment of staff should follow these steps.

Recognition / Assessment

1. *Identify consistent assignment as an area for potential improvement in nursing home performance.*

   - Based on nursing home quality improvement data, quality measures, staff survey results, comparison to benchmarks, etc.

2. *Identify authoritative information available for the topic.*

   - Review references listed in the *Consistent Assignment Resources*, as well as reliable and evidence-based performance improvement and quality improvement literature; recommendations from professional associations and organizations.
   - Identify ways to distinguish the reliability of information about consistent assignment (i.e., how to separate valid ideas from myths and misconceptions about the topic).

3. *Identify current approaches to consistent assignment in the nursing home.*
   For an overview of the process, see the *Consistent Assignment Process Review Tool* and related *Consistent Assignment Flow Diagram*.

   - Are the nursing home's approaches consistent with the steps identified in the *Consistent Assignment Process Framework*?
   - Identify the nursing home's current approach to assigning staff, and its basis.
   - Who in the nursing home decides on assignment of staff, and what is the basis for their chosen approaches?

4. *Identify areas for improvement in processes and practices.*
   Using the information gathered in Steps 2 and 3 above, compare current with desired approaches to consistent assignment. Address the following:

   - Check whether current nursing home policies / protocols and practices are compatible with desirable approaches to consistent assignment.
   - Check whether desirable approaches are being followed consistently.
   - Identify whether anyone has been reviewing and comparing approaches to consistent assignment to desirable ones.

Approach to Implementation (cont.)

- Have issues related to consistent assignment been identified previously? Were they followed up on? Has the nursing home previously evaluated its performance and taken steps to improve?

Cause Identification

5. *Identify the causes of issues related to performance and practice, including root causes.*

- Identify issues and practices that are inhibiting attaining the goal of increasing consistent assignment.
- Identify underlying causes (including root causes) of, and factors related to, inconsistent assignment of staff in the nursing home.
- Identify reasons given by those who do not adequately follow desirable approaches.

Management

6. *Reinforce optimal practice and performance.*

- Continually promote "doing the right thing in the right way."
- Follow the steps of the *Consistent Assignment Process Framework*, throughout the nursing home.
- Identify and use tools and resources to help implement the steps and address related issues.
- Based on information and data collected about the organization and the processes and results related to consistent assignment, reinforce systems and processes that are already optimal.

7. *Implement necessary changes.*

- Address underlying causes (including root causes) of the challenges and obstacles to the nursing home's capacity to implement consistent assignment.
- Implement pertinent generic and cause-specific interventions.
- Address issues of individual performance and practice that could be improved in trying to increase consistent assignment.
- Refer to *Consistent Assignment Resources* for resources and tools that can help to address this goal.
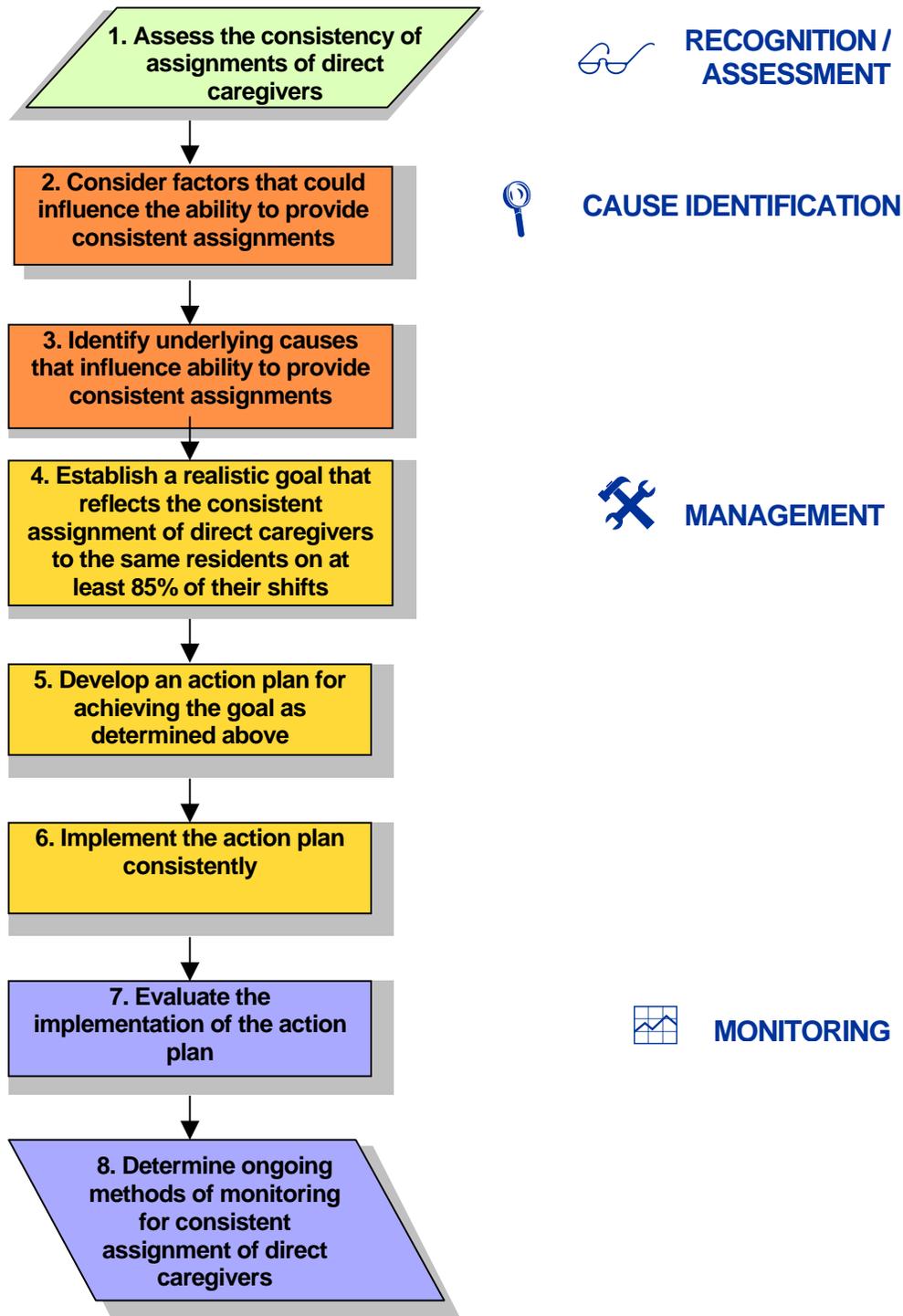
Approach to Implementation (cont.)

Monitoring

8. *Reevaluate performance, practices and results.*

    ▪ Recheck for progress towards getting "the right thing done consistently in the right way."
    ▪ Use the *Consistent Assignment Process Review Tool* to identify whether all key steps are being followed.
    ▪ Use the *Consistent Assignment Process Framework* and related references and resources from Steps 2-4 above, and repeat Steps 2-7 (Recognition / Assessment, Cause Identification, and Management) until processes and practices are optimal.
    ▪ Continue to collect data on results and processes.
    ▪ Evaluate whether changes in process and practice have helped attain desired results.
    ▪ Adjust approaches as necessary.

Flow Diagram –Consistent Assignment Process Framework

1. Assess the consistency of assignments of direct caregivers

RECOGNITION / ASSESSMENT

2. Consider factors that could influence the ability to provide consistent assignments

CAUSE IDENTIFICATION

3. Identify underlying causes that influence ability to provide consistent assignments

4. Establish a realistic goal that reflects the consistent assignment of direct caregivers to the same residents on at least 85% of their shifts

MANAGEMENT

5. Develop an action plan for achieving the goal as determined above

6. Implement the action plan consistently

7. Evaluate the implementation of the action plan

MONITORING

8. Determine ongoing methods of monitoring for consistent assignment of direct caregivers

CONSISTENT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS FRAMEWORK

PROCESS STEP	EXPECTATIONS	RATIONALE
🖋 PROBLEM RECOGNITION / ASSESSMENT		

1. Assess the consistency of assignments of direct caregivers.	- The nursing home will use a systematic approach to assess the consistency of assignments of direct caregivers.
	- The nursing home may choose to look at the assessment data on a small and manageable sample scale by:
	  • Targeting one specific hall or unit.
	  • Targeting one specific unit.
	  • Targeting one specific group of direct caregivers (CNAs who provide all ADL care, or CNAs who provide all restorative nursing care, LPNs, charge nurses, etc.)
	  • Targeting one specific group of residents (all short stay residents, etc.)
	- Once the nursing home has selected the above sample, they will review existing records. For example:
	  • Review the direct caregiver schedules to determine how many times each direct caregiver was assigned to the same unit, hall, shift, etc.
	  • Review the direct caregiver schedules to determine if the direct caregiver was assigned the same residents for each day/shift worked.
	  • Review the resident ADL records and shift assignment / work sheets to cross check
		- "Consistent Assignment" refers to having the same caregivers consistently caring for the same residents on at least 85% of their shifts.
		- A systematic, standardized assessment process is critical to permit the nursing home to use the information to enhance their quality improvement efforts.
		- Developing and maintaining a systematic, standardized assessment process will permit the nursing home to measure, over time, any improvement or decline related to their established goal.
		- Assessing the nursing home's current situation allows it to establish a measurable benchmark from which to develop their quality improvement action plan.
		- Assessing the consistency of consistent assignment will permit the nursing home to also measure its impact on other indicators, such as:
		  • Resident satisfaction and choice.
		  • Resident care.
		  • Family satisfaction and choice.
		  • Employee satisfaction and job retention.

CONSISTENT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS FRAMEWORK (cont.)

PROCESS STEP	EXPECTATIONS	RATIONALE
	with the direct caregiver schedules to ensure accuracy of information being assessed. ● Review the direct caregiver time cards / records.	
🔍 CAUSE IDENTIFICATION		
2. Consider factors that could influence the ability to provide consistent assignments.	- The nursing home will identify factors that could impact its ability to provide consistent assignments of direct caregivers. This may include (but is not limited to): ● Existing staffing policies. ● Organizational culture. ● Informal staffing practices. ● Leadership decisions / directives ● Leadership flexibility / desires ● Direct caregiver choices / desires ● Direct caregiver numbers / availability ● Direct caregiver competency ● Direct caregiver flexibility ● Resident desires / choices ● Resident acuity ● Family desires / choices ● Physical plant design / layout - The nursing home will identify any trends and patterns related to identified factors.	- Identifying factors that contribute to the ability to provide consistent assignments of direct caregivers at the start of the process helps to: ● Enhance the success of the process in meeting the goal. ● Ensure involvement of all parties. ● Identify formal and informal structures. - Identifying trends and patterns will alert the nursing home to readily addressable issues ("low hanging fruit") that can help improve the situation, as well as those that may require a more detailed action plan.

CONSISTENT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS FRAMEWORK (cont.)

PROCESS STEP	EXPECTATIONS	RATIONALE
CAUSE IDENTIFICATION (cont.)		

3. Identify underlying causes that influence ability to provide consistent assignments.	- The nursing home will review the above noted trends and patterns and identify the specific causes that influence its ability to provide consistent assignments for direct caregivers.
	- To help identify these underlying causes, the nursing home may:
	   • Conduct additional fact gathering exercises to identify and clarify trends and patterns. For example, a trend may be that many longstanding direct caregivers desire consistent assignments but the more recently hired direct caregivers do not. The nursing home would interview both categories of direct caregivers to clarify the basis for their different desires.
	- Assess to determine any trends and patterns related to:
	   • Specific halls / units
	   • Resident populations
	   • Staff populations
	   • Certain shifts
	   • Weekdays, weekends, etc.
	- Conduct a root cause analysis of a specific trend or pattern. For example, if a shortage of available direct caregivers were identified as influencing consistent assignment, then the nursing home would perform a root cause
		- Identifying underlying causes will help the nursing home develop specific interventions in the action plan to address those underlying causes and make it more likely that the action plan will meet the established goal.
		- For example, longstanding CNAs may have a different understanding than newer CNAs about the meaning of "consistent assignment".
		- Findings identified through a root cause analysis may take the nursing home longer to address, as these root causes may be imbedded in the nursing home's formal and informal structures. However, to have sustained improvement, the nursing home should strive to uncover and address these root causes.

CONSISTENT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS FRAMEWORK (cont.)

PROCESS STEP	EXPECTATIONS	RATIONALE
CAUSE IDENTIFICATION (cont.)		
	analysis to try to identify the underlying reason for not having enough direct caregivers. These may include (but not be limited to): • An in-depth review of staffing budgets. • Wage and benefit comparisons. • Retention / turnover data, etc. • Availability of qualified individuals.	
⚒ MANAGEMENT		
4. Establish a realistic goal that reflects the consistent assignment of direct caregivers to the same residents on at least 85% of their shifts.	- The nursing home will establish specific and realistic targets to measure within the goal. Realistic target measurements may include: • All direct caregivers in the nursing home will provide care to the same residents 85% of their shifts. • Direct caregivers on a specific hall / unit will provide care to the same residents 85% of their shifts. • Direct caregivers on a specific shift will provide care to the same resident 85% of their shifts, etc.	- The nursing home may need to begin with a realistic, achievable goal. That may include implementing the action plan on one hall / unit or one shift at a time. This can allow the nursing home to adjust to changes in a manageable way, thus increasing the likelihood of meeting the established goal. - The nursing home must know and understand their current position and their ultimate goal in providing consistent assignment of direct caregivers. - Goal setting allows the nursing home to envision potential achievements through their quality improvement efforts.

CONSISTENT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS FRAMEWORK (cont.)

PROCESS STEP	EXPECTATIONS	RATIONALE
MANAGEMENT (cont.)		
5. Develop an action plan for achieving the goal as determined above.	- The nursing home will use the findings determined through the *Cause Identification* steps (Steps # 2 and 3) to help develop an action plan to meet the established goal. This may include (but not be limited to): ● Develop and incorporate a written plan of action into the nursing home's overall quality improvement process. ● Identify specific interventions to implement. ● Identify specific time frames to complete the interventions. ● Identify the staff responsible to implement the interventions within the identified time frames.	- The nursing home needs an action plan as their "road map" to move forward in meeting their goals related to consistent assignment of direct caregivers. - Without an action plan to guide the quality improvement efforts, it is less likely that the goal will be achieved and sustained. - In determining the interventions for the action plan, the nursing home should consider using available resource materials and best practices from expert sources.
6. Implement the action plan consistently.	- The nursing home will communicate to staff (residents and families as appropriate) the action plan goals, interventions, time frames, and responsible parties. - The nursing home will provide a copy of the action plan to all parties involved, as appropriate.	- The success of any action plan relates to successfully communicating with parties involved. - All parties involved should be aware of what is expected of them. - All parties involved in the action plan should have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback during implementation of the action plan.

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CONSISTENT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS FRAMEWORK (cont.)

PROCESS STEP	EXPECTATIONS	RATIONALE
MONITORING		

7. Evaluate the implementation of the action plan.	- The nursing home will periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the action plan
	- The nursing home may also need to reevaluate the action plan in between scheduled evaluation times, as implementation barriers are identified. This reevaluation may include (but is not limited to):
	  • Are specific interventions being implemented as written?
	  • Are the interventions being implemented within the identified time frames?
	  • Are the identified responsible staff members implementing the interventions?
	  • What are the results / findings related to the implementation of the action plan?
	- The nursing home updates and revises the action plan as indicated by the evaluation process.
		- Action plans should be working documents for the nursing home that are revised as indicated during the evaluation process.
		- Evaluation of the action plan allows the nursing home to determine if they are "on the right track" or need to take a different path to try to meet their goal.
		- Barriers commonly arise as action plans are being implemented, which may necessitate revisions in order to achieve the goal.

8. Determine methods of ongoing monitoring for consistent assignment of direct caregivers.	- Upon completing implementation of the action plan, the nursing home will monitor periodically for whether the goal continues to be met (maintained). - The nursing home will determine consistent methods by which they will monitor. These may include (but are not limited to): • Resident interviews.	- The nursing home should periodically monitor compliance with the action plan to determine if the goal is being met consistently. This allows it to determine if process changes are integrated fully within the nursing home's culture or if the process continues to need attention.

CONSISTENT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS FRAMEWORK (cont.)

PROCESS STEP	EXPECTATIONS	RATIONALE
⊞ MONITORING (cont.)		
	- Direct caregiver interviews - Family interviews - Review of direct caregiver schedules and/or assignment sheets. - Review of direct caregiver time records / cards, etc.	- The nursing home may choose one or more methods for monitoring compliance with the goal. Without ongoing monitoring, the nursing home can only speculate.

CONSISTENT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS REVIEW TOOL

Abstraction Date:			
Nursing home Name:		Nursing home Address:	
How many workers involved?		What unit is being evaluated?	
	CNAs only		Entire nursing home
	CNAs/LPNs/LVNs only		Nursing home unit / hall(s). Please specify:
	CNAs/LPNs/LVNs/RNs and others		Shift:
How many residents involved?		How long has consistent assignment been used?	

☞ RECOGNITION/ASSESSMENT

		YES	NO	N/A
1.	Were worker schedules reviewed to determine how many times direct caregivers were assigned to the same unit, hall, shift, etc.?			
2.	Were assignments and other records (time cards) reviewed to assure direct care workers were assigned to care for the same resident each day / shift worked?			

♀ CAUSE IDENTIFICATION

		YES	NO	N/A
3.	Did staff identify factors that could impact the ability to provide consistent assignments, such as existing staffing policies, leadership directives, etc.?			
4.	Did staff identify any trends and patterns related to factors impacting the provision of consistent assignments?			
5.	Did staff conduct a root cause analysis to identify underlying reasons for trends and patterns affecting the provision of consistent assignments?			

⚒ MANAGEMENT

		YES	NO	N/A
6.	Did staff establish a realistic goal for providing consistent assignment (entire building, hall / unit, shift)?			
7.	Did staff develop a written action plan that includes specific interventions, time frames and assigned responsibility to meet the goal of implementing consistent assignments?			
8.	Did staff communicate and provide a copy of the action plan to all involved parties (residents, families, and staff) as appropriate?			

▦ MONITORING

		YES	NO	N/A
9.	Is the action plan evaluated at specific intervals to monitor assignment progress, identify unanticipated barriers, and make updates where needed?			
10.	Are resident, family and staff interviews periodically done to monitor satisfaction with assignment schedules?			

CONSISTENT ASSIGNMENT RESOURCES

RESOURCE	LOCATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Recommended Tools		
Individualized Care Curriculum: Unit 3 – Management That Makes A Difference (Consistent Assignment, Staff Retention, etc.)	MedQIC	MedQIC is an Internet resource. Questions related to Nursing Home content can be directed to: Teresa M. Mota, RN or Paula Mottshaw Quality Partners of Rhode Island 235 Promenade Street Suite 500, Box 18 Providence, Rhode Island 02908 Phone: (401) 528-3200
Literature / Latest Research		
Farrell, D. The Case for Consistent Assignment in the Nursing Home Setting. Medicine and Health in Rhode Island. May 2006. 89:5; 187-188	Medicine and Health in Rhode Island	Rhode Island Medical Society 235 Promenade Street Suite 500 Providence, RI 02908 Phone: (401) 331-3207
Campbell, S. Primary Nursing. J Gerontological Nurs. 1985. 8:12-6	Journal of Gerontological Nursing	(For reprints) Journal of Gerontological Nursing 6900 Grove Road Thorofare, NJ 08086-9447 USA Phone: (856) 848-1000 E-mail: jgn@slackinc.com
Goldman, BD. Nontraditional Staffing Models in Long-Term Care. J Gerontological Nurs. 1998. 24:29-34.	Journal of Gerontological Nursing	
Pilot Study Shows Value of Consistent Assignment	My Innerview	My InnerView Inc. 500 Third Street Wausau, WI 54403 Phone: (715) 848-2713 Email: info@myinnerview.com

CONSISTENT ASSIGNMENT RESOURCES (cont.)

RESOURCE	LOCATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Literature / Latest Research (cont.)		
Quality Improvement in Nursing Homes: A Call to Action	Journal of the American Medical Directors Association	(For reprints) Elsevier, Inc.
Mueller, C. A Framework for Staffing in Long-Term Care Facilities. Geriatr Nurs 2000; 21:262-7.	Geriatric Nursing	360 Park Avenue South New York, NY 10010 Phone: (212) 633-3813 Email: reprints@elsevier.com
Patchner, MA. Essential Staffing For Improved Nursing Home Care: The Permanent Assignment Model. Nursing Homes, June 1993.	FindArticles.com	(For reprints) PARS International Corp. Phone: (212) 221-9595 x123 E-mail: joe.nunziata@parsintl.com Website: www.magreprints.com