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Tips for Outstanding Telephone Service

When speaking on the phone, we are provided with a tremendous opportunity to reinforce and grow the relationship with our patients, their families and other "customers." It makes good (economic) sense to take the extra time and effort to make these calls as meaningful and service oriented as possible. Attention to service will go a long way in building satisfaction and making the person you're speaking with feel as if they are truly special.

1. Always tell your patient/family member or "customer" what you CAN do for them. Don't begin your conversation by telling them what you CANT do.

2. Allow irate family members or patients to vent. Do not interrupt them or start to speak until they have finished having their say.

3. Diffuse anger by saying "I'm sorry" or "I apologize."

4. Use the person's name at different points in the call.

5. Make certain that your "solution" to the problem is acceptable to them. Get their approval and agreement.

6. Always conclude each call with a "Thank you" or a verbal message of appreciation for their business.

7. Make certain that your tone of voice is in sync with your words. Remember, your tone of voice can completely contradict your message. When you smile on the phone, it comes through!

8. Listen attentively! There is nothing worse than asking an irate or troubled family member to REPEAT what they have just said.

9. Go the extra step by following up on your solution. Reconnect to make certain that everything has been handled in a satisfactory manner and they are pleased with the outcome.

10. Remember to ask if there is any other service you can provide. Taking the time to ask the question often results in increased trust and a happier patient/family member.

Source:

Adrian Miller Direct Marketing

Development Corner



"Because Time Matters..."

New 24/7
Admissions Program
Launched

"Back in the day..." nursing homes only admitted residents Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Today we see residents coming in more and more often "after-hours," along with referrals for admissions.

To meet the ever-changing needs of our fast-paced environment, NHCA is test-piloting a new 24 hours a day, seven days a week admissions line. "Because Time Matters" is the kick-off slogan we are using to roll-out the program. The admissions department at each of our CT locations is now equipped with a BlackBerry to help facilitate any after-hours admissions.

The program is being spear-headed by Maribeth Muller, NHCA's Director of Census Management, and Rosemary Beaudoin, Director of Admissions at [Riverside Health Care Center](#) after a six month successful trial period.

So far, we've had great success taking referrals and accepting admissions into our facilities late into the evening and on weekends, when admissions offices are typically not staffed. This is another opportunity for us to stay ahead of our competition and provide them with the best customer service possible. If we did not have this program in place, consumers and other healthcare providers might decide to go somewhere else.

Marvin's Message

It's hard to believe, but we are already two months into 2009! This year will prove to be a tough one regarding reimbursement from the federal and various state governments as the economy continues to weaken. We are dealing with the financial impact of the economy on our facilities on a few fronts:

- We are actively working with our federal trade association to have money from the federal stimulus package you've heard about allocated to state Medicaid programs. In addition, we continue to work to ensure that no more money is taken away from the Medicare reimbursement program.
- On the state level, we are working with our trade associations and state legislators to maintain the current level of funding provided to nursing homes. We understand the impact the recession is having on our states as consumers spend less, less money comes into the state through sales taxes, individuals lose their jobs, unemployment costs rise and the cycle continues. We need to ensure that state officials understand the impact that reduced nursing home reimbursement has on our residents and staff. *From time to time, we will ask you, our residents, and their families to write to legislators and express your concerns.*
- On an internal level, we are working with our administrators and department managers to closely monitor all costs in facilities in an effort to eliminate any unnecessary spending.

Despite the tough financial times we face as a company, we must do everything we can to stay competitive in our industry and remain a leader in the respective communities we serve. To that end, whenever possible we are developing new and innovative programs to ensure that we are the top choice when consumers and professionals make healthcare decisions.

Our [Regency House of Wallingford](#) facility recently opened a new [Passport Rehabilitation](#) unit to meet the needs of their community. For more than 30 years, Regency House has provided care to 130 residents in all three-bedded rooms. The remodeled Passport Rehabilitation unit is a modern, state-of-the-art rehabilitation suite, which is actually the newest facility in the state of Connecticut.

In addition to Regency House, [Belair Care Center](#) in North Bellmore, Long Island, NY is also in the middle of a complete renovation of the facility. That facility is more than 40 years old and is also exclusively three-bedded rooms. The first units to open (March 2009) will house more than 40 residents on two floors, in spacious one and two-bed rooms, with one floor devoted to long-term residents and the other for short-term rehabilitative stays.

These are just a few of the projects we are developing to further improve the financial stability and longevity of all NHCA facilities. Stay tuned for more updates in future editions of the National HealthCare Herald.

Marvin
President & CEO
National HealthCare Associates



Human Resources Happenings

2008 Administrator of the Year Awarded

Joe Seminaro the Chief Executive Officer of [Cold Spring Hills](#) in Woodbury, Long Island, NY was awarded NHCA's "Administrator of the Year" for 2008, due in part to his outstanding performance and that of his facility. Joe is currently overseeing a massive overhaul of the 12-acre, multiple facility campus, which provides care for nearly 700 short-term patients, long-term residents, adult day care attendees, and home health care clients. Internal renovations and new construction are helping to position the campus as a premier provider of healthcare services to Southern New York. Congratulations Joe!

Welcome Aboard...

Diane Curtis recently joined the NHCA team as our Senior Director of Accounts Receivable. In this position, Diane oversees the collection of all funds from the care and services we provide to our patients and residents in our 26 facilities.

Several new administrators have joined the NHCA team in northern New York over the past few months: [Chris Alexander \(The Pines at Catskill\)](#), [Fred Deck \(The Pines at Utica\)](#), and [Diane Sullivan \(The Pines at Rutland\)](#). These individuals are all experienced administrators who are guiding their facilities through times of great change as newer facilities in the NHCA family.

In Connecticut, [Patrick McDonnell](#) joined the team at [Regency House of Wallingford](#) to oversee their transformation into the newest facility in the state.



Congratulations to Lew Abramson ([Water's Edge](#))! Lew has been an administrator in several NHCA facilities over the past 25 years, including Regency House and Bloomfield. During the month of January, Lew celebrated and reminisced with his staff on his 25 years of service to NHCA. Lew was most recently the NHCA "Administrator of the Year" in 2007.

Nursing News

- It's not even two months into the new year and our facilities that are going through surveys are doing a great job. Special congratulations to the [Glens Falls Manor](#) team for a deficiency free survey in December. What a feat! The [Cambridge Manor](#) team completed their annual survey in January and is proud of their results. Congratulations to both teams!

- The staff at [Maywood Center](#) opened their doors to their New Jersey community a little over a year ago. Within days, word got out that it was a new, beautiful facility with a staff that catered to their "customers" needs. It goes without saying that they give great care. In this short timeframe, they have become the facility of choice in their area and just a few weeks ago, had a very positive survey. Congratulations on your One Year Anniversary with NHCA and a successful survey!

- Back in December, the federal government (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) launched their "5 Star Rating" system, with a goal of providing a system for consumers to use in determining placement for themselves or their loved ones in skilled nursing facilities. While we agree with the concept, we do not agree with the system they use to determine the ratings of facilities. We are continuing to work with various trade associations to have the government evaluate the program and change the systems' rankings.



Each month and quarter, the "5 Star Rating" program is updated on the CMS website, [Nursing Home Compare](#), based on recent surveys. In the past few weeks, [Huntington Hills](#), [Ludlowe](#), and [Brambleboro](#) have seen their ratings increase. So check back often and see how your facility is doing.