

Bottom Line: Resident Satisfaction Is Our Ultimate Goal

On a facility level, the *Road to Excellence* quality initiative is intended to complement and support existing facility efforts in preventing pressures ulcers, managing chronic pain, and improving customer satisfaction. These areas are already a priority quality assurance focus of most facilities.

On a statewide level, the *Road to Excellence* is designed to highlight in an organized, measurable and unified way the overall success of care efforts of individual facilities working together. The data and success stories of the initiative will be spotlighted during the fall election campaigns as evidence of the profession's commitment to care improvement and effective stewardship of increased funding.

A critical centerpiece of the *Road to Excellence* quality initiative is resident and family satisfaction surveys. Resident satisfaction is at the heart of everything we do. Too often our efforts to do a better job are driven by what surveyors want. Our mission is to serve residents, not surveyors. And do you know what the reward for that is? When we know what they want, residents are generally easier to please than surveyors. Residents are more responsive, more grateful, and more loyal.

Our quality assurance efforts are often driven, directed and focused by compliance surveys. That is a reality of long term care. But more rewarding are quality assurance efforts driven, directed and focused by customer surveys. And those efforts at improving customer satisfaction ultimately improve compliance.

Satisfaction surveys benefit your facility, staff and residents by:

- ✓ Linking what we do to what residents and families want, not just to what surveyors want;
- ✓ Targeting our quality improvement efforts on those specific areas that residents and families notice and value;
- ✓ Serving as an early warning system of potential problems, before surveyors, lawyers, ombudsmen or reporters get involved;
- ✓ Providing positive feedback and recognition for departments and staff that are doing well, increasing motivation and morale;
- ✓ Producing concrete marketing data to use with potential residents and families, at resident and family councils, in facility newsletters, with referral sources, and with the media; and
- ✓ Generating evidence-based, comprehensive facility-wide data to counteract impressions of surveyors and others who focus only on an isolated incident or complaint.

Studies have shown that just by asking customers what they think improves satisfaction. Knowing that residents and families will be asked about their level of satisfaction helps remind and focus staff in being more “person-centered” during their daily routines.

What components does a customer satisfaction program need? An effective customer satisfaction survey needs to give you information and data you can use. The survey should be:

- ✓ **Comprehensive**, covering all departments and services the facility provides, and reflecting quality of care, quality of life, resident activities, staff performance and staff sensitivity;
- ✓ **Specific** in asking about services, rather than just asking a few simple, generic “halo” questions;
- ✓ **Confidential**, unless the resident or family specifically wants their particular concerns known to someone at the facility;
- ✓ **Standardized** to be able to measure improvements over time and provide benchmarking comparisons with a wide range of other similar facilities;
- ✓ **Validated** in order to maintain professional credibility;
- ✓ **Varied**, allowing for open-ended questions and individualized comments, as well as standard responses; and
- ✓ **Analyzed** comprehensively for every aspect of the survey results so the facility can develop an effective and practical action plan based on the results.

Next practical steps on the *Road to Excellence*:

For customer satisfaction results to be usable by the associations in the upcoming fall election campaign in influencing and impacting legislative candidates, individual facility results need to be reported by August 31, 2008. To do that, the 2008 Satisfaction Surveys need to be conducted and submitted by June 30, 2008.

- If your facility already has a standardized customer satisfaction survey program, we ask that you conduct your 2008 surveys before June 30.
- If your facility has not yet chosen a standardized customer satisfaction survey program, we ask that you do so by the end of April, so surveys can be conducted during May and June.
- Report your overall satisfaction survey results in the “Members Only” section of <http://www.roadtoexcellence.org/> by the end of August. Your individual facility results are password protected, so contact your association to find out the password.

For facilities that have not chosen a standardized customer satisfaction program, the associations recommend the Confidence Satisfaction program, which is Illinois-developed and long term care-specific, with over a decade of Illinois experience and

data. Confidence surveys also embrace a variety of long term care settings, including nursing facilities, assistive living, supportive living and home care, as well as a variety of customers, including residents, families, staff, and physicians. More information can be obtained about Confidence at www.confidence-surveys.com. If you have specific questions, you can call 630.325.6170 or e-mail to surveys@lsni.org.

The bottom line in evaluating customer satisfaction is this – what your customers think and feel about your facility’s performance helps your managers and staff make improvements in programs and services that your customers will become aware of and value.

***The Road to Excellence* is lighted by satisfied customers.**