Nurses Are Responsible to Ensure New Staff Members are Competent

By Janet Fulfs, President

It is in each nurse’s job description to:

1. Promote teamwork by sharing information and with open communication to solve problems.
2. Provide staff development and training to ensure quality nursing care.
3. Perform all duties within the parameters of the Nurse Practice Act.

A new staff member may be assigned to you to perform his/her orientation and to verify his/her competence. You should already be familiar with this process since you most probably went through it as a new staff member yourself. Every nurse is expected to cooperate with the new staff members, to educate them to our procedures and policies, paperwork and to have them demonstrate essential skills pertinent to the care of the client.

AHHC supplies competency and orientation forms to the homes, usually located in the paperwork box located in the homes of the private duty clients. Each form is divided into two separate areas. The first area requires the demonstration of the skills necessary for the client. This means that the staff member must perform these skills him/herself. You must see them suction the client, do the GT care, administer oxygen, etc.

The second area allows the staff member to verbalize certain aspects of care, giving you information about the critical thinking skills of the new staff member. This area affords you the opportunity to test the knowledge base of the new staff member. Do they know how to handle an emergency? What will they do if the oxygen saturation falls? Can they identify signs and symptoms of aspiration and how to prevent it?

It is your job to ensure the new staff member is able to provide safe and effective care of the client. They must demonstrate essential critical skills, and you must be convinced they can perform independently. Once you have made that decision, you are to complete and sign the competency form(s) and return them to the office. If you have not been convinced by the new staff member, it is your responsibility to contact your nursing supervisor and voice your concerns. We can always provide the new staff member with additional training, education, etc. This aspect of your job is a very important one. Please remember when you were new. Provide new staff members with all the support, respect and knowledge we have come to expect from anyone representing American Home Health.

Remember, the bottom line is the health and well being of all of our clients. This is not an exercise in pushing paper.
Asset Allocation and Diversification

The ingredients to a healthy retirement income!

Asset allocation refers to how you mix your investments across the various types of funds or asset classes (e.g., the mix of stocks, bonds and cash in your portfolio). It might surprise you to know that your asset allocation is what ultimately drives the earnings your portfolio achieves!

- **Asset Allocation Drives Return**
  Research shows that how you allocate your investments across asset classes determines more than 90% of your investment return. In other words, it’s more important to have the right mix of stocks, bonds and cash than to pick Stock Fund A over Stock Fund B. The specific investments you choose, and when you buy and sell — not to mention plain ‘ole luck — don’t have very much to do with overall performance. Rather, these factors are part of the investment manager’s job.

- **Diversification Lowers Risk**
  Asset allocation not only drives performance, it also helps you reduce risk. You know the old saying, “don’t put all your eggs in one basket?” Well, investing in different funds within each asset class is called diversification. This is the single most important thing you can do to manage investment risk. Diversifying also increases likelihood of achieving longterm goals and enhances potential for long-term gain.

- **Diversification among Asset Classes**
  “Mixing” your portfolio across asset classes makes you less dependent on performance and risk of any single asset class. Effective diversification requires combining assets that behave differently under various economic or market conditions. Moreover, investing in assets that have dissimilar return behavior may insulate your portfolio from major downswings.

- **Investing for the Long-Term**
  Remember that for most of us, investing for retirement is a long-term proposition. So don’t overreact to the short-term fluctuations in the market. Stocks go up and down but over the long term, they provide rewards for accepting this inherent risk. Next, don’t forget to rebalance your portfolio! Reassess your situation periodically to determine if personal circumstances warrant a shift in your approach.

For more information on asset allocation and diversification, please contact Assurance Financial Services, Rich Cordova at rcordova@assuranceagency.com or (847)463-7344.

This material is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified attorney, tax adviser, investment professional or insurance agent.

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Nursing Talk

RUNNING LATE AND LOSING MONEY

Dear Cassandra,

My supervisor is distressed because I am frequently “running late” to work. Sometimes I am fifteen minutes late. Sometimes I am an hour late for my shift. My supervisor even gave me a Written Warning. I always call the office to report that I am running late. What does it matter? What can I do?

Running Late in River Forest

Dear Running Late,

Say you are an hour late for work. This creates a domino effect. The nurse on duty or the caregiver cannot leave until you arrive. The caregiver may need to go to work. If you are late, the caregiver may miss his train and be late for work. The nurse on duty may have appointments scheduled for after work. If she cannot leave on time, she may be late for her appointments. Your being late also disrupts the client’s schedule.

Every time you are an hour late for work, you have wasted the opportunity to earn an hour’s wages. This is called lost productivity. You are throwing away money.

Why are you constantly “running late” to work? Finding the reason is critical to solving your problem. Was the problem traffic related? Were you stuck in traffic because of an accident ahead of you? Did your car have a flat tire? Was the problem weather related? Were the roads bad because it was snowing? Was your garage door frozen shut?

Maybe you have a problem getting dressed for work. I knew a woman who felt she had “nothing to wear” to work. Her closet was full of clothes. She would put on one outfit, look at herself in the mirror, and then take off the clothes. She would repeat this process three or four times each

**COMING SOON:**
- Food Groups
- Water
- Dietary Fat
- Carbohydrates
- Protein
- Vitamins and Minerals


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Be Prepared: Staying Safe and Healthy in Winter Weather

Winter storms and cold temperatures can be hazardous, but if you plan ahead, you can stay safe and healthy. Prepare your home and cars. Keep emergency kits stocked. Be ready for power outages. Wear appropriate clothing. Check on children, the elderly and pets.

Although winter comes as no surprise, many of us are not ready for its arrival. If you are prepared for the hazards of winter, you will be more likely to stay safe and healthy when temperatures start to fall.

Many people prefer to remain indoors in the winter, but staying inside is no guarantee of safety. Take these steps to keep your home safe and warm during the winter months:

- **Winterize your home.**
  - Install weather stripping, insulation, and storm windows.
  - Insulate water lines that run along exterior walls.
  - Clean out gutters and repair roof leaks.

- **Check your heating systems.**
  - Have your heating system serviced professionally to make sure that it is working and ventilated properly.
  - Make sure that your heating system is clean, working properly, and ventilated to the outside.
  - Inspect and clean fireplaces and chimneys.
  - Install a smoke detector. Test batteries monthly.
  - Have a safe alternate heating source and alternate fuels available.
  - Prevent carbon monoxide (CO) emergencies.
    - Install a CO detector to alert you of the presence of the deadly, odorless, colorless gas.
    - Learn symptoms of CO poisoning: headaches, nausea, and disorientation.
    - Keep grills and generators out of the house and garage. Position generators at least 25 feet from the house.

- **Be prepared for weather-related emergencies, including power outages.**
  - Stock food that needs no cooking or refrigeration and water stored in clean containers.
  - Keep an up-to-date emergency kit, including:
    - battery-operated devices, such as a flashlight, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, and lamps;
    - extra batteries;
    - first-aid kit and extra medicine;
    - baby items; and
    - cat litter or sand for icy walkways.

Many people spend time outdoors in the winter working, traveling, or enjoying winter sports. Outdoor activities can expose you to several safety hazards, but you can take these steps to prepare for them:

- Wear appropriate outdoor clothing: layers of light, warm clothing; mittens; hats; scarves; and waterproof boots.
- Sprinkle cat litter or sand on icy patches.
- Learn safety precautions to follow when outdoors.
  - Be aware of the wind chill factor.
  - Work slowly when doing outside chores.
  - Take a buddy and an emergency kit when you are participating in outdoor recreation.
  - Avoid traveling when the weather service has issued advisories.
  - If you must travel, inform a friend or relative of your proposed route and expected time of arrival.
  - Carry a cell phone.

- **Prepare your car for winter.**
  - Service the radiator and maintain antifreeze level; check tire tread or, if necessary, replace tires with all-weather or snow tires.
  - Keep gas tank full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.
  - Use a wintertime formula in your windshield washer.
  - Keep a winter emergency kit in your car in case you become stranded. Include
    - blankets;
    - food and water;
    - booster cables, flares, tire

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Nursing Talk

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morning until she found the “perfect” outfit. Needless to say, she was often “running late” for work.

Maybe you can blame a dog. One employee said that her dog failed to wake her up on time. Another said she was walking down the street, and a big dog assaulted her and stole her purse. Another employee had a little white dog who thought he was Superman. He would grab the Christmas tree skirt and tear through the house with the tree skirt flowing behind him like Superman’s cape. Each morning she would let him out in the back yard so he could “do his business.” He wanted to play, and he would refuse to come back inside the house. Catching this little Superman made the employee late for work many days.

According to an ABC Good Morning America Web site, the following types of consistently late individuals have been identified:

- **Rationalizer**—blames other factors, like their children or spouse.
- **Absent minded professor**—is forgetful.
- **Deadline-driven adrenaline junkie**—enjoys the adrenaline rush associated with pressure.
- **Rebel**—defies authority, gets a psychological high by keeping others waiting.

The article gives the following tips for improving behavior:

- Plan to be early. Add a 15 minute buffer to your commute.
- Learn to tell time. Set a timer to ring when it is time to leave the house.
- Learn to say, “No.” Reduce the activities and responsibilities in your life.
- Don’t be a perfectionist. Agonizing and obsessing over details only contributes to lateness.
- Limit distractions. Turn off the radio and TV.
- Get out the door. Don’t go back to do “one more thing.”

Make up a threat. Tell your friends that, if you are late for dinner, you will buy wine for everyone. The possible expense may mo-
Be Prepared: Continued from page 3

pump, and a bag of sand or cat litter (for traction);
» compass and maps;
» flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries;
» first-aid kit; and
» plastic bags (for sanitation).
• Learn safety rules to follow in case you become stranded in your car.
  » Stay with your car unless safety is no more than 100 yards away, but continue to move arms and legs.
  » Stay visible by putting bright cloth on the antenna, turning on the inside overhead light (when engine is running), and raising the hood when snow stops falling.
  » Run the engine and heater only 10 minutes every hour.

Maximize your HSA contributions for the 2010 tax year.

The funding limits for 2010 are $6150 for family coverage and $3050 for individuals. For those 55 or older, an additional catch up contribution can be made in the amount of $1000. All 2010 contributions must be received by April 15. Any contributions made after December 31 will need a Deposit form, which is available (http://www.americanchartered.com/pdf/HSADepositWithdrawalForm.pdf). This form ensures that all Deposits, Withdrawals and Transfers are handled correctly and allocated to the correct tax year. If you are making electronic deposits please contact us to ensure that the deposits, are coded for the proper tax year.

You also have the option of making your contributions work harder for you by investing in an American Chartered Bank HSA Certificate of Deposit. Any American Chartered Bank Certificate of Deposit is eligible to be opened as an HSA Certificate of Deposit. Simply view the current available rates (http://www.americanchartered.com/rates.aspx) and include a letter of direction with your deposit for the appropriate Certificate. All HSA Certificates are free and only require a $1000 minimum deposit to take advantage of the great rates. Certificate of Deposits are subject to early withdrawal penalties if the money is accessed before maturity. Please contact an HSA banker with any questions.

Information regarding 2010 funding limits can be downloaded by going to this link http://www.americanchartered.com/ContentDocumentHandler.ashx?documentId=5363.

REMINDER:
All Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN)

It’s time to renew your license. Please ensure a copy is sent to the office after you receive your new license from the State of Illinois. If your license has not been renewed by 1/31/11, you will not be allowed to work as a nurse until the license has been renewed.

Please visit www.idfpr.com for more information.

Have you Met your Deadline?

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hepatitis B. Record — Deadline 7/29/10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance Policy — Deadline 12/01/10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>401(k) Safe Harbor Notice — Deadline 12/15/10</td>
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Note: Any and all missing HR Requirements will prevent you from accruing PTO.