
NEW FALL PREVENTION EFFORTS UNDERWAY IN ILLINOIS

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A new process designed to reduce falls in long-term care facilities has been launched in Illinois. The process, known as Fall Prevention Action Planning, is designed to reduce the rate and severity of falls by tapping into the expertise and experiences of staff, residents, and family members to establish actionable, measurable prevention goals for each stakeholder group and the organization as a whole.

The McLean County Nursing Home (MCNH) became the first facility in Illinois to integrate Fall Prevention Action Planning into their safety efforts earlier this year in partnership with the Illinois-based safety consultancy the Hile Group. The planning process will come to a close in late May, leaving the organization with a concrete plan backed by stakeholder support and customized to the specific needs of the MCNH, as well as success indicators for tracking the impact of the plan.

Fall prevention is nothing new to nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. With an annual average of 200 falls per 100 beds and a projected \$54.9 million annual cost of injuries by 2020, the industry has long recognized fall prevention as a priority. Illinois facilities have risen as industry leaders in the last decade with the development of established risk assessment programs, investigation processes, and a multi-disciplinary safety committee.

Fall Prevention Action Planning, first created by the Hile Group, is designed to build upon these advances to take nursing homes one step closer to the goal of zero falls per year. What sets the process apart from other programs is how it is created. While standard programs are typically created by individuals or a small group of experts and then standardized for multiple

facilities, Fall Prevention Action Plans are created by representatives from all stakeholder groups involved in fall prevention and are written to meet the needs of a specific facility. Perhaps most distinct is that this planning process includes residents and resident family members to ensure that all perspectives are represented and all concerns addressed.

The bulk of the planning process takes place in a four-hour working meeting with representatives from each department as well as residents and family members. Planning meetings and communication with management in the weeks before the four-hour meeting ensure that the process is tailored from the beginning to the needs of the facility. Participants are then charged with teaching the resulting plan to those not in the room and integrating it into existing programs and activities, such as new Hire Orientation, daily staff meetings, or communications with resident's family members.

The collaborative nature of Fall Prevention Action Planning ensures that a facility can benefit from the expertise and experiences of the whole system when developing fall prevention strategies. For individuals involved in the process, a customized plan means an opportunity to learn from one another and better understand what other stakeholders are doing to prevent falls. And the interaction between staff, residents, and family members particularly opens the door to a clearer understanding of roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for partnership.

Fall Prevention Action Plans are also unique in the specificity. Throughout the planning process, stakeholders are taught to write goals that are specific, detailed, and observable. Instead of goals that call

for staff to make fall prevention a priority generally, goals created in this process specify the who, what, where, and how of day-to-day prevention efforts (For example: A goal for the nursing staff could be "Complete a job safety briefing before transferring any resident from beds, chairs, toilets, and wheelchairs"). Specific, observable goals turn the Fall Prevention Plan into a resource that stakeholders can use on a day-to-day basis to monitor their own actions and the efforts of others to prevent even a "first fall." The clearly defined roles and responsibilities written into the plan give staff a greater understanding of expectations and consequences for upholding their roles and provide management with the tools needed to consistently and reliably enforce prevention efforts.

Beyond a reduction in the number and severity of falls, Fall Prevention Action Planning helps improve communication across stakeholders and develop stronger relationships between departments. The working meeting and implementation activities that follow introduce strategies for mining existing conflicts for opportunities and improving candid dialogue among stakeholders. The process can also be used to tackle other programmatic initiatives, particularly Quality Assurance efforts. Just as it does with fall prevention, the action planning framework can give facilities the tools it needs to bolster existing efforts and successfully weave new initiatives into an existing system.

For more information on Fall Prevention Action Planning, contact Anjanette Riley at riley@hilegroup.com or visit the Hile Group website at www.hilegroup.com