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HSAG HEALTH SERVICES ADVISORY GROUP



De-Escalation Toolkit

Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG) is the West Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) Region 7.

De-Escalation Toolkit

Purpose

This nursing home De-Escalation Toolkit is designed to help nursing facility staff address the unique challenges of supporting residents during behavioral expressions of distress. It contains strategies to assist staff in responding to and de-escalating challenging behaviors, while providing the best possible care. De-escalation is a technique that can be used in any situation where there is a potential for conflict or aggressive behaviors, with the goal of diffusing tension, promoting understanding, and preventing further escalation.

Nursing facility staff will learn how to assess and regulate their own emotions that may escalate an already tense situation. They will discover how fear, stress, and anxiety may be manifested and examine strategies to de-escalate potential crisis situations with residents. Finally, nursing facility staff will learn the importance of and techniques for debriefing team members following an incident.

Overview of the De-Escalation Toolkit

This toolkit is organized into three parts:

1. Self-check to determine one's feelings, triggers, and biases.
2. Tips to de-escalate challenging behaviors that residents might display.
3. Debrief with team members following any incident. Debriefing offers an opportunity to discuss the event in a structured manner to identify improvement strategies. It is also a chance to discuss if medical causes were a contributing factor and ensure that the incident is reported to the interdisciplinary team and the resident's family.

Knowing how to engage with residents when emotions are high will help provide better care and safety, thereby prioritizing the residents' well-being.

Disclaimer: The use of this tool is not mandated, nor does it ensure regulatory compliance. These de-escalation tactics are options for consideration. This is not intended to mandate policy or direct any action.



Self-Check

When facing a challenging situation, it is important to do a self-check. A self-check is an assessment of one's feelings, cultural identity, triggers, values, assumptions, and biases. This self-awareness will help you manage your responses in a safe and effective manner.

Before engaging, assess personal readiness by asking yourself the following:

Self-Check	Consider	Tips
What is happening?	What is being requested? What is the underlying issue? What is going on at this point in time?	Gather information from others when needed. Stay calm.
What is going on with me?	What is your state of mind? Be mindful of your triggers and emotions.	Know when to step away or ask for help. Have a code word so others know when to intervene.
What is going on around me?	Is the environment stressful? Are other residents or family members present?	Keep a safe distance. Move the discussion to a private area when possible.

Remember to *respond* to the person with empathy, rather than *react* to your feelings.



10 Tips to De-Escalate Challenging Situations

High levels of fear, stress, and anxiety can cause a wide range of behaviors.

These behaviors can be displayed as:



Agitation

Demands



Threats



Profanity



Physical Aggression

Here are 10 de-escalation tips to help provide the best possible care while maintaining safety:

1. Remain calm and speak in a neutral voice.
2. Listen to the concern(s) and answer questions.
3. Keep expressions and posture relaxed. Limit hand gestures.
4. Summarize what the person has expressed— "Tell me if I have this correct … "
5. Empathize with feelings and be non-judgmental.
6. Set clear and enforceable limits. Avoid making threats or promises.
7. Allow the person to speak without interruption when appropriate. Being heard is a valuable tool.
8. Focus on the solution, not the problem.
9. Know when to step away or request assistance from a peer or supervisor.
10. Do not take it personally.

Using the "5 WHATS" to Debrief

Debrief with team members following any incident. Debriefing offers an opportunity to discuss the event in a structured manner to identify improvement strategies. It is also a chance to discuss if medical causes were a contributing factor and ensure that the incident is reported to the interdisciplinary team and the resident's family.

1 | What	2 | What	3 | What	4 | What	5 | What
What happened?	What went well?	What are areas for improvement?	What will be done differently?	What did I learn about myself or the resident?

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