

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

MANAGEMENT: SERVICE Model Spells Success For Dementia Care

Find out why this facility's approach = a smart move.

If you're looking for a simple formula to improve your dementia and outcomes, consider **Alois Alzheimer Center's** SERVICE model. Each letter of the acronym stands for a critical aspect of the facility's philosophy and program.

"Our big message is that the total organization must be on board with dementia care to achieve positive outcomes and deal effectively with people's behaviors," says **Susan Gilster, RN, PhD, NHA**, executive director of the center in Cincinnati.

Here are the components of the organization's SERVICE approach:

S: Service. "We are here to serve people and can't forget that," emphasizes Gilster. "That is our product."

E: Education. She says her organization is "totally amazed" how many people in the industry aren't prepared for their job. They aren't told the expectations or receive minimal orientation ...quot; or just initial orientation. "Education is not only about preparation but also orientation and mentorship," she says. Alois provides ongoing education weekly on all three shifts. "The questions staff have today will differ from those they have a year from now if they stay with the job."

R: Respect. "In our culture, people don't always like old people ...quot; they don't like to get old themselves, and they don't like people who take care of old people," observes Gilster. "We can't change that overnight but we can change our environment. Respect is a given for how staff treat residents, but it's also about how staff treat each other and administrators treat staff." Families must also behave in a respectful way toward staff, she emphasizes.

V: Vision. "How do you follow a leader who is going nowhere?" asks Gilster. "We have to have a destination in mind and develop systems until we get there. We engage staff in developing that. Staff has come with their own vision, which they put into words."

I: Inclusion. She observes that "people want to be a part of where they work and have a voice. We get staff input on decisions--for example, do we get the big-screen TV or a lift?"

C: Communication. Alois promotes "open communication," relays Gilster. "We need to be able to critique ourselves while also being open to possibilities." As a result, the facility administration doesn't encourage people to always be yay-sayers. "We get most excited when people say, 'That's a stupid idea and here's why.' That way, the decisions we make are good ones."

E: Enrichment. Alois encourages people to maintain a healthy balance of work and other pursuits--and to spend time with themselves. "That gets into that area that some people call warm and fuzzy, but it's critically important."

Editor's note: Tune in to an audioconference by **Susan Gilster** on culture change in dementia care and how the SERVICE model has paid off in spades for her organization. For details about the conference and recording, go to www.audioeducator.com/industry_specialty.php?s=21upcoming.