

## Long-Term Care Survey Alert

### Management Strategies: Care For Your Caregivers: Shore Up Staff's Ability To Deal With Verbally Abusive Residents

**These 2 strategies can help prevent resident neglect or abuse.**

Abuse can beget abuse, especially when caregivers lack the skills and administrative support to deal with verbally aggressive nursing home residents on a daily basis.

These two simple strategies can go a long way toward helping caregivers deal therapeutically with residents who say hurtful things to their caregivers:

1. Assign a seasoned staff person to mentor a new employee who is caring for a verbally abusive resident for the first time, advises **David Lennox, PhD**, a consultant in Holliston, MA, who helps facilities deal with resident aggression and other abuse-related issues.

"The staff person should ask the new employee how it's going with the assignment and how she's handling the resident's behaviors." The mentor might say: "Here's how I deal with it," thereby reinforcing the facility's abuse prevention training.

Then a week or two later, a nurse manager or the mentor should sit down with the staff person to make sure she is using an adaptive depersonalization strategy (that is, not taking the resident's verbal abuse personally). "Continue to check in with the person and encourage the person to be honest with you about how things are going," Lennox advises.

2. Conduct staff care meetings once a month. The meeting shouldn't be an encounter type group or a whine session but a forum for sharing frustrations, feelings - and how the caregivers are addressing residents' behaviors in various situations, Lennox instructs. "No one is 'that good' that they can tolerate certain behaviors and not need some support to prevent them from getting angry and/or mixed up," Lennox says. "A social worker or psych-oriented nurse in the facility can lead the group or a mental health provider from the community may agree to do it as a part of his community service."