

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Reader Question: What Regs, Oversight Should a Facility Provide for Volunteers?

Question:

Our facility has increased its size and census over the past year and we are considering implementing a more comprehensive volunteer program to have people from the community help with activities. We're also thinking of having volunteers visit residents who don't have anyone coming to see them on a regular basis.

Currently, we have a handful of volunteers who are residents' family members and retired facility staff. In general, what types of policies and procedures, training, and background checks should we implement for volunteers? Are there federal or state laws that apply to volunteers in nursing homes?

Answer:

"There are no federal regs, and I am aware of no state requirements, although the facility should check to be sure of that," says attorney **Joseph Bianculli** in Arlington, Va. For example, make sure there are no state requirements for facilities to show proof that volunteers have had a TB test and criminal background check, etc., he adds.

"The biggest concerns are making sure all volunteers are aware of, and adhere to, pertinent facility policies and procedures, and are properly supervised," Bianculli advises. For example, many facilities require volunteers under age 16 or 18 to have a parent or adult accompanying them, he points out.

"Most facilities have at least some orientation and training regarding check-in and check-out procedures; activity and visiting hours; resident and fire safety; infection control (instructions not to come if sick); privacy law requirements; limits on interventions (no touching, feeding, administering meds or treatments, etc., unless authorized); and the like. Most supervision issues are practical, i.e., there needs to be a single staff person who is responsible to coordinate, schedule, and make sure everyone who shows up has something specific to do ..."