

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Risk Management: Have Potential Flu Symptoms? Stay Home to Help Protect the Nursing Home, Says One Facility

This approach could help flu-proof your facility.

When the third shift is short two CNAs, the last thing on a scheduler's mind may be infection control issues. Yet, that's exactly what everyone, staff included, should be considering, stresses **Deborah Burdsall, RN, MSN, CIC**, infection preventionist at Lutheran Home in Arlington Heights, Ill.

The problem: "Someone will try to call in sick and the person doing staffing will convince the person" to come on in because the facility is short, she says.

Instead: Lutheran Home has implemented "strict policies that say if a staff person has symptoms, he or she needs to stay home, and not just during an outbreak" of flu or other contagious illness, Burdsall reports. "We want to make sure we don't have people afraid to call in sick," she emphasizes. What about staff members who seem to call in sick a lot? "If certain people seem to be taking advantage of that policy and have high absenteeism, then you deal with that individually," Burdsall says. Sometimes, however, the people who "cry wolf" are the ones who end up coming in sick because they have used up their sick time or paid time off, she points out. In such cases, the facility management has to encourage -- not punish -- honesty, Burdsall emphasizes.