

## Long-Term Care Survey Alert

### Staffing Trends: 6 Ways Feeding Assistants Can Benefit Residents and Your Facility

Feeding assistants can be a boon to a nursing facility's nutritional care and quality of life in these ways:

1. Providing individualized interventions for care planning. Chilton, WI-based long-term care nutritionist **Annette Kobriger** worked with a Wisconsin nursing facility that used feeding assistants and found that they really got to know residents' likes and dislikes and idiosyncracies. "The feeding assistants came up with all kinds of specific interventions," such as the fact that a picky eater would wolf down peanut butter on toast or a resident would eat well if fed in a certain way. "For example, a particular resident may not like to drink fluids until after the meal," Kobriger notes.
2. Freeing up licensed nurses and CNAs to focus on helping resident with specialized eating/drinking needs due to stroke and Parkinson's disease, etc.
3. Creating a warmer, non-institutional atmosphere in the dining room. The feeding assistants can create more resident-focused conversation and socialization in the dining room, in Kobriger's experience.
4. Preventing residents from losing weight while adjusting to life in the facility. Kobriger found that the feeding assistant program eliminated the tendency for residents to lose weight initially after admission. "That problem no longer occurred because the resident had someone to meet him at admission and socialize with him in the dining room," she says.
5. Enhancing customer satisfaction with a facility's dining program. Families liked seeing their loved ones getting to eat while the food was still warm, Kobriger reports. And potential customers visiting the facility see residents getting individualized attention at mealtimes.
6. Providing a potential pool of CNAs. Facilities can tap their feeding assistants for nurse aide training - or even sponsor some of them to become nurses. Since feeding assistants usually only work part-time, "you can hire young people going to school and get them interested in caring for elders" as their life avocation, adds **Steve Shields**, administrator of **Meadowlark Hills**, a continuing care retirement community in Manhattan, KS.