

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

What Do You Think?

Question 1: Does a nursing facility need an active ethics committee?

Question 2: How might an ethics committee have a positive impact on survey outcomes?

Answer 1: Facilities should have an active ethics process, which may include an ethics committee. The facility should be prepared to use the ethics process to address questions or situations as they arise - and to create policies for using the ethics process or committee.

Answer 2: The creation of an ethics committee and maintenance of an ethics process shows sensitivity and concern by the facility for issues that aren't black and white. Surveyors don't like gray areas and will all too frequently cite a facility for not making an immediate choice about a situation. Facilities that have an ethics process and/or ethics committee create a point of entry to engage surveyors in dialogue and collaboration to reach an appropriate (although not perfect) solution to a problem. Examples include disputes over end-of-life care or cases where a resident has eccentric conduct that doesn't pose a danger to himself or others. Another example would be a resident/family with religious practices that clash with facility culture or the majority of other residents' religious beliefs and practices in the facility.

Source: **Harvey Tettlebaum, JD**

Husch & Eppenberger LLC, Jefferson City, MO