

USER'S GUIDE TO
The Observable Indicators of Nursing Home Care Quality Instrument

1. Were the conversations between staff and residents friendly?

Did you observe staff talking to the residents about things other than resident care? For example, did the conversation focus on medications or symptoms? Or did they discuss family, friends, the weather, and other non-care related topics. It is important that staff know the residents and communicate in a friendly manner.

2. When staff talked to residents, did they call them by name?

Again, staff should be very familiar with the residents. Staff and residents should be friends. Just as is in life, there will be conflicts, but staff should be friendly to the residents. Calling a resident by name indicates a friendly relationship. A friendly relationship is important because the staff need to recognize when residents are not behaving normally. (This may indicate an illness)

3. Did residents and staff acknowledge each other and seem comfortable with each other (for example, smile, eye contact, touch, etc.)?

4. Did residents and staff interact with each other in positive ways (for example, conversation, humor, touch, eye contact, etc.)?

Non-verbal communication (for example, smile, eye contact, touch, etc.) is as important as verbal communication. Residents and staff need to be comfortable with each other. They interact on a daily basis. Non-verbal communication can tell you a lot about the relationships in the facility. Smiles, eye contact and touch indicate friendly, caring relationships. Friendly relationships are important because the staff need to recognize when residents are not behaving normally. (This may indicate an illness)

5. Did staff appear caring (compassionate, warm, kind)?

6. Did staff treat residents as individuals with dignity and respect?

Often there are more residents than staff. However, staff need to know the residents and treat them as individuals. Each person is an individual and has different needs. Staff should care enough to get to know the residents as individuals and treat them with dignity, compassion and respect. You should be able to detect a caring attitude about the residents on the part of the staff.

7. Were registered nurses (RNs) visible? (Look at name badges of staff to identify RNs. May need to ask staff.)

If the staff are not wearing names badges, ask staff if a registered nurse(s) is working on the shift you are observing.

8. Did registered nurses (RNs) seem to know the residents so that they are able to direct their care? (May need to ask staff)

This is important because registered nurses are needed to evaluate each resident and see that they get the care they need. Good facilities have a lot of staff, but the RNs are trained to recognize when the resident is having problems. Their job is to evaluate resident needs and see that each resident gets the care that he or she requires. Talk with a RN to learn more about how RNs know the residents. Ask he/she to describe their most challenging resident.

9. Did staff help residents with food or fluids?

Generally, most residents need frequent help and encouragement with food and fluids throughout the day, not just at meal times. You should hear and see staff helping and encouraging residents to drink fluids and eat snacks or meals.

10. Were residents walking or independently moving about the facility with or without assistive devices such as canes, walkers, splints, and wheelchairs?

Generally, you should see some residents up and moving about the nursing home. It is important to encourage older adults to be as active as possible. Maintaining or regaining mobility is a primary goal for most residents.

11. Were staff helping some residents walk or move about the facility?

Again, you should see some residents up and moving about the facility. If the resident needs assistance, staff should be helping residents.

12. Did staff communicate with confused residents in positive ways (for example, talk, touch, sit with, etc.)?

Again, communication is very important. Staff should be very familiar with the confused residents. Staff and residents should be friends. Just as is in life, there will be conflicts, but staff should be friendly to the confused residents. Staff communicating with confused residents (for example, talking, touching, sitting with) indicates a friendly, caring relationship. A friendly relationship is important because the staff need to recognize when residents are not behaving normally. (This may indicate an illness)

13. Were residents dressed and clean?

14. Were residents well groomed (shaved, hair combed, nails clean and trimmed)?

Appearance is important to all of us. Appearance is important to older individuals as well. Residents should appear well groomed and clean. Some residents need assistance with grooming and getting dressed. Therefore, if some residents are not well groomed, it may indicate a problem with their care.

15. Were odors of urine or feces noticeable in the facility?

Just as in your home, these odors should not be pervasive throughout the nursing home. If there is a strong odor of urine or feces, there are major quality of care problems.

16. Were other unpleasant odors noticeable in the facility?

When personal hygiene of residents is poor in a nursing home, other unpleasant odors become apparent. This should not be the case.

17. Were hallways and common areas uncluttered?

Because nursing homes are busy places with lots of people living and working in them, some clutter is likely. However, it should not be hazardous to walk or wheel a wheelchair throughout the building.

18. Were resident rooms, hallways, public, and common areas clean?

It should be clean, that is, free from dust, mold, mildew, stains on the floors or walls, etc. Floors do not have to be shiny, as people with vision problems are affected by floors with a glare.

19. Were buildings, grounds, and furniture in good condition?

This is the resident's home. The building, grounds and furniture should be in good condition. The residents should feel safe and take pride in their surroundings.

20. Were the hallways well lighted?**21. Were resident rooms well lighted?**

As we age, our eyesight declines. It is important that residents be able to see well for their safety, comfort, and ability to move about the nursing home.

22. Did confused residents have a safe place to wander indoors? (May need to ask staff)

Confused residents need a safe space to wander and be active. The space should be free from clutter and hazards. Ideally, staff will be located near by in case a resident needs help such as finding the bathroom.

23. Did confused residents have a safe place to wander outdoors? (May need to ask staff)

Residents need to be able to be outdoors. Ideally, for confused residents the outdoor space is limited so they can be outside but not wander into unsafe areas.

24. Did confused residents have access to outdoor space? (May need to ask staff)

Designing safe accessible outdoor space for confused residents is challenging. Residents must not be able to wander into areas where they might be harmed. Sometimes outdoor spaces are only available when staff accompany residents. This will limit the time residents can be outdoors.

25. Did other residents have access to outdoor spaces? (May need to ask staff)

Many residents prefer to spend many hours outdoors and should be able to do so if they wish. The outdoor space should be safe, large enough to accommodate the residents, clean and well maintained, just as the indoor space.

26. Were residents' rooms personalized with furniture, pictures, and other things from their past?

It is important that residents have some personal items to help them feel at home. This is their home now, so they should be allowed and encouraged to bring in some personal items.

27. Were there pets (dogs, cats, birds, etc.) and/or live plants in facility?

Again, this is the resident's home. They should be allowed and encouraged to have some plants or other home-like things in their rooms.

28. Were the pets and/or live plants in good condition?

If plants and/or pets were observed in the facility, they should be in good condition. The staff are responsible for the appearance of the facility.

29. Was there a home-like appearance about the facility?

The facility should look and feel like a home, not an institution. Residents should live, not just reside. Do you think residents can enjoy the facility and feel good about it? If you were a visitor coming to this facility to see a family member, do you think you would like to come here often?

30. Were visitors visible in the facility (family members, volunteers, community members, etc.)?

There should be visitors in the facility. Family members should be involved in the care of their loved ones and should be allowed to visit. People enjoy the company of family and friends and this should not stop just because they entered a long-term care facility.