



QUESTIONS FROM THE FIELD

Question: Is it true that private rooms must have a privacy curtain?

Answer: Private rooms that are licensed or guaranteed to only have one occupant do NOT need privacy curtains.

The state regulation specifically pertaining to privacy curtains is 19 CSR 85.012 (72) and it corresponds to F460. The following information is from the State Operations Manual Appendix PP - Guidance to Surveyors for Long Term Care Facilities.

F460

§483.70(d)(1)(iv) Be designed or equipped to assure full visual privacy for each resident;

Interpretive Guidelines §483.70(d)(1)(iv)

“**Full visual privacy**” means that residents have a means of completely withdrawing from public view while occupying their bed (e.g., curtain, moveable screens, private room). The guidelines do not intend to limit the provisions of privacy to solely one or more curtains, movable screens or a private room. Facility operators are free to use other means to provide full visual privacy, with those means varying according to the needs and requests of residents. However, the requirement explicitly states that bedrooms must “be designed or equipped to assure full visual privacy for each resident.” For example, a resident with a bed by the window cannot be required to remain out of his or her room while his/her roommate is having a dressing change. Room design or equipment must provide privacy. Surveyors will assess whether the means the facility is using to assure full visual privacy meets this requirement without negatively affecting any other resident rights.

§483.70(d)(1)(v) In facilities initially certified after March 31, 1992, except in private rooms, each bed must have ceiling suspended curtains, which extend around the bed to provide total visual privacy in combination with adjacent walls and curtains;

Interpretive Guidelines §483.70(d)(1)(v)

The term “**initially certified**” is defined as all newly certified nursing facilities (NFs) or SNFs as well as NFs and SNFs after March 31, 1992, which re-enter the Medicare or Medicaid programs, whether they voluntarily or involuntarily left the program. It is not necessary for the bed to be accessible from both sides when the privacy curtain is pulled.

Dave’s Memo: In other words, the regulations do not require a room divider for private rooms. This is a generalization though; there is still room for confusion with the term “private room.” If a resident is residing in a room that is licensed and/or certified for double occupancy, and a resident is paying for a private room and no other resident occupies the room, the curtain may not be required per regulation. If a privacy curtain is not provided at the point of double occupancy, it is clearly a regulatory violation. The resident should always be made aware of room accommodations upon admission and reassured that the room will remain private unless sufficient notification is provided in advance.

Please keep in mind the opening and closing of doors for private and non-private resident rooms should be of the utmost priority in preventing exposure from the 'hallway' therefore, respecting resident dignity. Also, remember that window curtains will need to be pulled to ensure privacy while providing care.

Please e-mail your “Questions from the Field” to Dave Walker, LTC Leadership Coach, Sinclair School of Nursing, University of Missouri at walkerdavi@missouri.edu

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