

INCREASED TRAINING FOR CNAs

ISSUE: CNAs in Nursing Homes Need to be Better Trained

BACKGROUND:

Arkansas law currently requires a person to complete 75 hours - less than two weeks - of training to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). By contrast, the required training program for manicurists consists of 600 hours; beauticians and barbers must complete 1500 hours of training. Which position requires more knowledge and carries the greater burden of responsibility, the care of disabled, infirm elderly or the beautification of fingernails?

Furthermore, many nursing homes provide this training in their own facilities, making it possible for them to interrupt the training and pull students from the classroom to care for residents when short-staffed. This places both residents and students at risk as a burden is placed upon the student to perform unfamiliar or just learned tasks under pressure, usually without supervision.

Oversight of CNAs is rare. After only two weeks of training the certified nursing assistant is usually faced with the entire care of 6 to 10 or more infirm residents. He/she is expected to know what those persons need, medically, physically, and emotionally, and to provide it lovingly and carefully. Supervision in the period following the training is greatly needed, as well as oversight from more highly trained licensed staff at all times.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

A turn-over rate among CNAs in Arkansas nursing homes of 100% or higher is not uncommon. When former CNAs are questioned about their decision to quit, they invariably cite a feeling of inadequacy to do what was expected of them, both because they had not been given the proper knowledge and because of short staffing. This results in terrible inefficiency, both in terms of lost manpower and in monetary loss.

* The cost of hiring and training new workers is very high compared to on-going wages. When a new employee quits within a few weeks or months that cost is lost.

* New employees are less efficient than "old-hands".

* Residents suffer until new employees learn their needs, their habits and likes and dislikes.

Studies have shown that residents, especially confused and demented patients, do better when they have the same caregivers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

CNA training requirements should be greatly expanded, both in length and in content. CNAs need to be able to recognize a disease process as opposed to normal aging, get information about diseases they will encounter and the treatment for them, as well as basic care procedures.

There need to be requirements for oversight over CNAs, at all times but especially while new on the job.

Instructors and clinical instructors need to receive instructional training and be certified by the state to teach a training course.

CNAs need to receive daily information about the needs of their assigned residents, especially any changes.

Licensed nurses need training in management.