SURVEY TRAINING HANDBOOK
for the
Dietary Staff
Your Lifeline for Survey Success
Survey Training Handbook for the Dietary Staff is published by Opus Communications, Inc., a subsidiary of HCPro Corp.

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About the expert</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than just nursing care—we count on you!</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The survey process in a nutshell</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When surveyors ask, how should you answer?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-E-S-P-E-C-T resident rights</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety first</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom was right, wash your hands</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloves help protect you and the residents</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop resident abuse in its tracks</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What the regulations mean to you</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why survey results matter to you and this nursing home</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What the heck are they talking about?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop quiz</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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About the expert

Cindy Frakes, LNHA

Cindy Frakes, LNHA, administrator at Medicalodge Post-Acute Care Center in Kansas City, KS, served as the adviser for this handbook. Frakes has more than 25 years of experience in long-term care and has participated in numerous nursing home surveys.

She has held positions as a certified nursing assistant and has worked in medical records and as a regional manager. She has been a licensed nursing home administrator since 1980.

Frakes wishes to thank the dietary, laundry, housekeeping, and maintenance staff of Medicalodge Post-Acute Care Center for their valuable contributions in developing this handbook.
As you know, it takes more than nurses and nursing assistants to run a nursing home. Dietary staff, therapists, activities staff, housekeepers, maintenance people, and laundry staff all help make life better for our residents.

Think of the different nursing home departments as spokes on a wheel. It takes all of you to keep that wheel turning and the facility running right. If you think the job you do isn’t important, think again. So thanks for all of the hard work you do for our residents.

You make a difference

Always keep in mind that one person can make a difference in the lives of our residents. The job you do every day is an important one. Because of you, residents get good, nutritious meals. You make sure the scrambled eggs are hot and the orange juice is cold. You help residents who have trouble feeding themselves. You take care of details, such as making...
Sure Mrs. Jones, who is a diabetic, doesn't take sugar in her coffee.

Without you, the nursing staff can't provide the care the residents need. You help to create a home worth living in.

**We live by a tough set of rules**

This nursing home receives state and federal tax money to pay for the care of the residents. Because the government pays for most of the care, it has many rules and regulations that nursing homes must follow.

So who makes sure nursing homes follow the rules? Each year, the state sends out a team of surveyors or inspectors, usually registered nurses, to make sure nursing homes are doing the job right. This annual inspection takes about one week. It will be shorter or longer depending on the size of the facility and what kind of problems the inspectors find.

During this inspection visit, surveyors will watch you do your job and ask you questions. It can be a stressful time, like taking a test with the teacher standing over your shoulder. By being prepared and knowing what to expect, you'll have a better handle on the survey process. Read this handbook and keep it so you can refer back to it as a guide later on.

It is important for a nursing home to do well during a survey. The ultimate goal is to be deficiency- or mistake-free.
Hey, what’s for lunch?

So how important is the dietary department’s job? Dining adds life to the days of many residents who have little else to look forward to. Residents may not worry about what medications they take, but they sure will talk about what’s for lunch and dinner! Think about how important it is for our frail, elderly residents to eat good, nutritious meals.

Surveyors will also pay lots of attention to a nursing home’s kitchen and dining room. One of the first tasks surveyors complete when they arrive at the nursing home is an inspection of the kitchen for sanitation practices and cleanliness. In fact, the number-one survey problem for nursing homes across the country is failure to store, prepare, distribute, and serve food under sanitary conditions.

Have no doubt, the job you do is important to survey success and important to the health and well-being of our residents. It takes every individual doing his or her job well to make the system run right.
The survey process in a nutshell

When they come to this nursing home, state surveyors must follow a detailed process for conducting their inspection.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) writes and enforces nursing home regulations. This federal agency contracts with the states to conduct nursing home surveys. Nursing home staff have no advance notice that surveyors are coming. Surveyors can arrive at this nursing home at any time, including weekends and nights.

✔ How surveyors prepare for a visit
Before surveyors even arrive at this nursing home’s door, the members of the survey team have prepared for their visit. They know a great deal about the facility and its residents.

How is that the case? In what is called their off-site survey preparation, the survey team has reviewed reports about the facility, its residents, and the care they need. This review allows surveyors to identify issues that may be problems in the facility and select residents they will review. For example, do many residents have pressure sores or suffer from weight losses? Surveyors will then focus on residents with those problems.

✔ Initial tour and on-site preparation
All that preparation means that surveyors are ready to begin the survey immediately after they enter the facility. They will take an initial tour of the nursing home, getting their first
look at the facility, residents, and staff. This tour also includes a first brief look at the facility’s kitchen.

In evaluating this facility, surveyors will focus on residents’ grooming, dress, and hygiene and how staff members interact with residents. They will look for good infection control practices such as regular handwashing, cleanliness of equipment, and a safe environment. It is always important to give a good first impression to surveyors. Be professional and do your job as best you know how.

✔ Dietary tour
When CMS made major changes to the survey process in 1999, it put even greater focus on a nursing home’s kitchen and food services. Surveyors must assess whether the facility’s food storage, preparation, and service are done in a way that prevents food-borne illness or contamination.

Surveyors look at a wide variety of items, including the temperature of foods, infection control practices, dishwashing procedures, and food handling techniques. For instance, are potentially hazardous foods left on countertops, such as meat or butter that can quickly go bad? Are dietary staff members wearing appropriate clothes and hair nets? Surveyors will also observe two meals during the survey, probably the noon and evening meals, to check on residents’ overall dining experience.

✔ Resident interview
During the survey, the inspectors will talk to residents about what it is like to live in the nursing home. As part of the interview, surveyors will ask residents about the facility’s food
services. They will ask questions such as: Do you have any restrictions on your diet? How does your food taste? Are you served foods that you like to eat? Are your hot and cold foods served at a temperature you like? If you have ever refused to eat something served to you, did the staff offer you something else to eat?

Surveyors also want to know how residents feel about staff members at the facility. They may ask residents questions such as: Do the staff members treat you with respect? Has a staff member ever yelled or sworn at you?

✔ **Group interview**
During the survey, surveyors will also talk with members of the resident council if one exists, or with an informal group of residents.

✔ **Family/friend interview**
If surveyors cannot interview a resident (perhaps because he or she cannot understand the questions), the surveyors will try to interview a family member, friend, or guardian who acts on behalf of the resident and authorizes care.

✔ **Observations and citations**
Throughout the survey, the survey team will observe what goes on in the facility. Surveyors will then determine the facility's compliance with the regulations based on the information gathered during the survey. At an exit conference, the surveyors will meet with the nursing home administration and report any mistakes or deficiencies they found.
When surveyors ask, how should you answer?

As part of their inspection, you can expect that surveyors will ask staff members (maybe even you) questions. Although questions from a surveyor can be scary, remember to stay calm and answer truthfully.

Be prepared to answer the following questions during a survey:

• What would you do in case of a fire?

• What would you do if you saw or heard someone abusing a resident? Examples of hearing possible abuse might be hearing an argument, foul words, a slapping sound, or a resident crying out.

• Which residents have fluid restrictions, orders for thickened liquids, or special or therapeutic diets? How do you know whether a resident has any of these restrictions?

• What can you tell me about your nursing home's quality assessment and improvement program?

• How do you know what your nursing home's policies are? Policies and procedures refer to the rules and instructions you are given about how to do your
job right—such as reading the menus, writing down any menu changes or substitutes, using recipes, storing food in the refrigerator, and proper handwashing rules.

Keep these tips in mind when talking to surveyors:

• Don’t give more information than is asked for. Just answer the question. Don’t rattle on out of fear that you didn’t know the answer. If a surveyor asks a specific question about a resident’s diet, for instance, answer that question. Don’t take it as an invitation to talk about everything you know about that resident’s care.

• This is not the time to complain about the facility. You don’t want to blame other people or departments for a problem the surveyor is concerned about. Let surveyors find problems themselves.

• Talk to the surveyor just like you would talk to any important visitor. Be kind, professional, and use appropriate language.

And what should you do if you don’t know the answer to a surveyor’s question? Or if you “go blank”? If you don’t know the information, don’t guess. Don’t make it up. Don’t “wing it.” That can create problems. If you don’t understand the surveyor’s question, say so.

It’s okay to say, “I’m not sure, but I can find out for you.” Go get a supervisor for help. You need to find out the answer from someone who knows.
Comedian Rodney Dangerfield has complained for years: “I don’t get no respect.” But that’s one complaint you don’t ever want to hear from one of your nursing home residents. Protecting every resident’s rights and dignity is a top priority of this nursing home. Surveyors are constantly listening and observing to see how you and other staff members treat the residents. So follow these tips to protect resident rights:

• Stop and take time to listen to what each resident wants. Let the resident make choices.

• Don’t discuss a resident’s medical, social, or financial matters with people who are not involved in his or her care. Don’t hold such conversations where others can overhear.

• Protect every resident’s privacy. Pull curtains or close doors to protect privacy.

• Always knock and identify yourself before entering a resident’s room and then wait for a response.

• Introduce yourself to the resident.

• Talk to your residents while working with or near them. And don’t talk “over” the resident with another staff member.
Surveyors don't want to see staff members talking to each other and ignoring the residents.

- Sit down when feeding or assisting residents and talk to them.

- Always address each resident by his or her preferred name. Don't use nicknames or call a resident “honey,” or “darling” unless the resident asks to be addressed that way.

- Clean up the resident's hands and face after meals. Be sure there are no stains on clothing after meals.

- Clean up spills on tables and floors after meals.

- Be sure to address the concerns of any resident who is yelling out. Don't ignore the resident.

- Serve everyone at the same table in your dining room at the same time. No one should sit and watch others eat.

- Don't change the radio or television station without the resident's permission and make sure it's tuned to a channel he or she enjoys.

- Speak respectfully. Don't shout or use foul language.

- Don't borrow one resident's things for use by another resident.

- Don't help yourself to residents' personal items, such as taking candy or using their telephone. If you see someone else doing this tell that person to stop and let your supervisor know.
Safety first

You can help protect the safety of residents and everyone in the facility by knowing how to react in an emergency. Often surveyors will ask staff members questions about disaster and emergency procedures. Know the facility’s evacuation, fire procedure, and disaster plans. Know your role in the event of disaster.

In a fire, remember RACE:

R - Rescue
A - Alarm
C - Contain
E - Extinguish

When using a fire extinguisher, remember PASS:

P - Pull the pin
A - Aim at the base of the fire
S - Squeeze the handle
S - Sweep side to side

Safety rules protect you and the residents. Follow them.

Your facility will instruct you on how to lift safely to prevent back or other injuries. Use good lifting habits with all loads, large and small.
Mom was right, wash your hands

What’s the single biggest way to help ensure that infections don’t spread within this nursing home?

It’s handwashing. You can expect surveyors to take a close look at infection control practices, including whether you and other staff members regularly wash their hands.

Remember to wash your hands before and after caring for each resident!

It’s also important to wash your hands as a matter of personnel hygiene. So don’t forget to wash your hands after touching uncooked food, eating food, using the bathroom, petting animals, touching garbage, sneezing or coughing into your hands, or whenever in doubt. If you use the phone, wash your hands!

Dietary staff must remember to wash their hands each time they enter the kitchen—before they do anything else! Laundry and housekeeping staff should wash their hands each time they handle soiled laundry or remove gloves.

The regulations require handwashing, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says proper handwashing is the single most important procedure for preventing infections.
Follow these guidelines:

Wash your hands for at least 15 seconds, vigorously rubbing together the lathered surfaces. Pay particular attention to your fingernails and between your fingers. Thoroughly rinse your hands under a stream of warm water. Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet.

The government also recommends that health care workers have short, natural fingernails and that they not wear fake press-on nails. Long fingernails can harbor bacteria.

Gloves protect you and the residents

You wear gloves to protect both yourself and the residents you work with. When it comes to glove use, keep in mind:

- Use gloves whenever you may come in contact with bodily fluids including blood and urine.
- Don’t wear gloves in the hallways. Remove gloves and throw them in the trash before walking out in the hallway.
- Change your gloves between caring for residents.
- Wash your hands whenever you remove your gloves.
- Don’t touch barrels, door knobs, faucets, or residents’ personal items with dirty gloves on.

Remember, gloves don’t replace handwashing!
You, this facility, and the government want to make sure every nursing home does all it can to protect residents from abuse and neglect.

That’s why this nursing home has a zero-tolerance policy that prohibits the neglect and abuse of residents and the theft or use of a resident’s personal possessions without his or her permission.

Residents have the right to be free from any verbal, sexual, physical, and mental abuse. No one should abuse a resident—including friends, family members, guardians, visitors, other residents, volunteers, consultants, agency people providing resident services—nobody!

If you see any incident of resident abuse, report it immediately to your supervisor. If you see or hear something that makes you uncomfortable, don’t try to decide on your own whether it was abuse. Let your supervisor take that responsibility off your shoulders. It’s better to be safe than sorry.

What is abuse? It can be physical, such as hitting, slapping, pinching, or kicking. Verbal abuse includes threatening harm, saying things to frighten a resident, or using disciplinary, rude, insulting, or foul language. Mental abuse includes humiliation, harassment, or threats of punishment, such as saying to a resident, “If you don’t stop that I’ll take your call light away.”
Caregivers must never use cruel or mean language, roughly handle a resident, or ignore a resident while giving care.

Neglect can be harder to define. If a staff member’s failure to do something could cause a resident to get sick, it may be neglect. Not cleaning a resident’s room, not giving a resident the right kind of diet, or not giving a resident his or her medicine may also be neglect.

You can expect surveyors to ask staff members questions about how this facility protects residents from abuse. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- What would you do if you saw another person being abusive to a resident?
- How would you deal with an aggressive resident?
- Do you know the signs of burnout, frustration, and stress that may lead to abuse?

Surveyors will ask these questions to find out how this nursing home trains and encourages you and other staff members to let someone know whether they or another person needs a break or additional training so they can handle the daily stress of the job. We all know it can be very emotionally and physically challenging to take care of people. A supervisor may change the job assignment of a staff member for a while to give him or her a break, may talk about what to do when someone is very stressed, or may give extra training in how to handle tough situations.
What the regulations mean to you

It is important that you know how the regulations apply to your job duties at this nursing home.

There are many regulations that speak to food preparation, service, and sanitation. Every nursing home is responsible for ensuring that each resident has a well-balanced diet that looks and tastes good, and meets any special dietary needs.

Dietary services

Every facility must provide its residents with a nourishing, tasty, well-balanced diet that meets their daily nutritional needs. The bottom line is that residents must receive adequate nutrition. You need to be sure that food leaves the kitchen and is served to residents on time. Surveyors will observe meal-times to see whether staff members serve trays quickly and that they are not left on a hall cart or bedside table long enough to become cold. Surveyors pay lots of attention to food temperatures because after all, who wants to drink cold coffee or eat melted ice cream?

Tasty food

Are the residents in your nursing home satisfied with the meals you serve? The food should look good and taste good.
You must serve food to each resident at the proper temperature. Hot foods and beverages must be served hot, and cold foods and beverages must be served cold. The way food is stored and prepared must not allow it to lose its nutritional value. For instance, if food is cooked in water and held on a steam table for a long time, it can lose nutrients. Also, you must prepare pureed foods according to the menu instructions. Don’t add or take away ingredients.

You need to serve food in a form that meets the residents’ needs. Be sure a resident’s tray has the right food called for in an assessment and care plan. For example, is food cut, chopped, or ground for an individual’s needs?

Finally, the facility needs to have alternative meals available for residents who do not want the meal that staff serve. Staff members should offer and encourage a substitute meal if a resident has not eaten well. Make sure substitutions are of similar nutritional value. For instance, instead of grapefruit juice, offer orange juice, which the resident may prefer.

Always observe the amount of food residents eat. If they eat less than normal, ask whether they disliked the meal and want something else. Surveyors pay close attention to food intakes and will ask residents whether they liked the food and whether staff offered a substitute.

**Therapeutic diets**

A therapeutic diet is a diet ordered by a physician. The diet can be part of treatment for a disease or clinical condition.
(such as diabetes) or to eliminate salt or increase potassium or to provide a mechanically altered diet the resident is able to eat.

**Tip:** Check trays for correct diet and condiments. For instance, remember not to put sugar on a tray for diabetics or add salt for residents on low-sodium diets.

### Frequency of meals

Each resident must receive at least three meals daily, served at regular meal times. You must be sure there are no more than 14 hours between evening meals and breakfast, and provide residents snacks at bedtime.

This regulation ensures that the residents receive adequate and frequent meals without any long lapses in between.

### Assistive devices

Nursing homes must provide special eating equipment and utensils for residents who need them.

The intent here is to provide residents with “assistive devices” to maintain or improve their ability to eat independently. Examples of assistive devices are enlarged silverware handles or a special seating arrangement that helps a resident move close enough to the table to reach everything and sit up well.

**Tip:** In the dining room, check for equipment such as
spoon holders or high-edge plates if they are ordered for a resident. Surveyors will expect to see that residents have these devices if called for in their care plan.

**Sanitary conditions**

Every nursing home must store, prepare, distribute, and serve food under sanitary conditions.

This requirement is the most frequently cited deficiency in nursing homes. This regulation is intended to prevent the spread of illnesses through food, which can be fatal to nursing home residents.

Surveyors will check to see whether foods are kept at the proper temperature to prevent salmonella or other bacteria. Facilities must follow proper procedures in cooking, cooling, and storing foods according to time, temperatures, and sanitary guidelines. For instance, are raw meats stored away from vegetables and other foods? Do you and other staff members properly wash your hands before touching foods? Is the food prep area free of mice, roaches, and flies? Are insecticides and detergents labeled and stored away from food? Are trash and garbage bins clean and covered?

**Quality of care**

Nursing homes must make sure every resident is getting enough to eat and drink each day. Dietary staff can play an important part here by serving the right food and fluids, in
the right consistency, and monitoring the amount of food the resident eats at each meal and offering substitutes.

Remember to respect the residents’ food likes and dislikes as often as possible to encourage them to eat. Include the “hidden calorie” foods that are easy to give residents, such as condiments. For instance, be sure to butter toast, put sugar in coffee, pour syrup on pancakes, and so on, unless dietary restrictions prevent these steps.

Report all changes in appetite to a supervisor so that interventions to prevent weight loss can begin as early as possible.

Make sure residents have access to fresh water or fluids at all times. For residents who can’t move around on their own be sure to place a glass of water or other liquid within their reach. Keep fluids next to the resident at all times and assist or cue the resident to drink. You can also offer Popsicles, gelatin, and other similar non-liquid foods if they’re not restricted from a resident’s diet.

Tip: Be sure you provide thickened liquids to residents who need them. Be sure they are at the right consistency and that you thicken all liquids for those residents throughout the day. Don’t forget to thicken soups as well.

Editor’s note: If you want to read the actual regulations ask your supervisor for a copy of CMS’ State Operations Manual. It contains all the regulations, their intent, surveyor guidelines, and probes surveyors will use.
Why survey results matter to you and this nursing home

Your team’s ‘report card’

As you now know, it’s always important for a nursing home to do well during a survey. Every nursing home wants to be mistake-free.

If the surveyors find this facility has not followed a certain rule, they will give the nursing home a written list of deficiencies. The surveyors send this list of mistakes to the state and federal government in the form of a report card explaining what was found. This report card also tells the public how well we all do our jobs.

When surveyors find deficiencies, a facility must say how and when staff will fix the mistakes that were made and prevent them from happening again.

This facility has a quality improvement program. Your ideas to fix mistakes are an important part of this program. Ask your supervisor who is on the quality improvement team and give them your ideas.

Getting to know you, getting to know all about you

So how did this nursing home do during its last survey? The pub-
lic is also hungry for information about nursing homes. Who, they wonder, will provide the best care for their mother or grandfather?

CMS provides information about your facility, including a summary of the results from your last survey, on its Web site. You want the data to paint the right picture and to compare favorably with other nursing homes in your area. The job you do and the care you provide helps paint that picture. Go to the Nursing Home Compare page at www.medicare.gov/nhcompare/home.asp to check out the information that CMS includes about this facility.

**Frequency of surveys**

All nursing homes face a state survey at least once every nine to 15 months and sometimes more frequently. The most common survey is the annual survey, which your facility must pass.

Surveyors will come to a nursing home more often if surveyors uncover serious mistakes or if a facility has a poor survey history. A complaint about the facility or its staff from a resident, family member, or other person can also result in an investigation.

Keep in mind, it's always important to be survey-ready. Do things according to the rules. If you don't understand or know these rules, don't be afraid to ask your supervisor or the administrator for help. There are no dumb questions. There are more than 500 rules to try to follow and understand.
If you’ve never worked in long-term care before, during your first few days on the job you might have thought you landed on a different planet. CMS. MDS. QIs. What’s everybody talking about?

Here’s a little dictionary to help you interpret the language of long-term care.

**CMS**—The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), formerly known as the Health Care Financing Administration. This federal agency administers the Medicare and Medicaid programs. CMS writes and enforces the federal regulations that govern nursing home care.

**Survey**—CMS contracts with state agencies to conduct nursing home inspections or surveys to see whether facilities are following its regulations. State surveyors or inspectors do a yearly inspection of all long-term care facilities before renewing the facility’s license. A nursing home cannot operate without a license.

**Survey team**—Also called surveyors or inspectors. The team consists of nurses, dietitians, sanitarians, and others who inspect the facility.
Deficiencies—When a nursing home fails to meet a federal requirement, surveyors cite that home with a violation or deficiency. When there are no violations found, the facility is “deficiency-free.”

F-Tag—This is the term that corresponds to a specific federal requirement that nursing homes must meet. For example, the regulation for providing therapeutic diets is Tag # F326.

MDS assessment—MDS stands for Minimum Data Set. This is the detailed form that nursing home staff must use to assess a resident’s problems and needs. It is key to Medicare reimbursement and a critical part of the state survey process. Information on the MDS is the basis for a facility’s quality indicators or QIs.

Quality indicators—Also known as QIs. Currently CMS identifies 24 QIs or specific areas of resident care used to judge the quality of nursing homes. Surveyors use a facility’s QI data to focus on potential problems and identify residents for review. For instance, the QIs tell surveyors how many residents in a nursing home have pressure sores or how many have unexpected weight losses—factors that can indicate problems with their care.

Nutrition—Nursing home residents need to take in enough food to maintain their health. Every nursing home must ensure that each resident maintains “acceptable parameters of nutritional status” such as weight and
protein levels (unless the person has a medical condition, such as cancer, that makes it impossible).

**Hydration**—Nursing home residents need to drink enough fluids to maintain hydration and good health. If a resident becomes dehydrated because his or her body does not have enough fluids, it can have serious health consequences and even be life-threatening. Dehydration is so serious that even if only one resident suffers from it, surveyors will scrutinize why it happened and whether staff members could have prevented the problem.

**State Operations Manual**—Also called the SOM. Published by CMS, this manual contains the guidelines for conducting surveys and the regulations nursing homes must follow.

**Quality improvement**—Also called quality assurance. Regulations require each nursing home to have a quality assessment and assurance committee to identify problems and come up with plans to correct deficiencies.

**JCAHO**—The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Some nursing homes choose to undergo an accreditation survey by this independent, not-for-profit organization that evaluates and accredits health care organizations. A JCAHO survey is separate from a state survey and is conducted by surveyors who work for the Joint Commission.
Pop quiz

The following questions relate to the survey handbook you have just read. Please respond to the questions below to the best of your ability.

1. When state surveyors come into this nursing home they are checking to be sure the way staff members do things complies with federal regulations.
   True False

2. One item surveyors will look for in the dining room is whether residents who need adaptive devices to help them eat, such as a built-up spoon handle, have them.
   True False

3. What should you remember to do before entering a resident’s room?

4. Residents need to eat what’s on the planned menu, therefore if a resident does not like the meal that’s offered, the facility should not substitute other foods.
   True False

5. Surveyors will start from scratch when they arrive at this nursing home’s door, having no prior knowledge of the facility’s operations.
   True False

6. What do the four letters in RACE stand for?
7. If you see an incident that you suspect may be considered resident abuse (but you’re not sure), you should report what you saw or heard to your supervisor right away.

True    False

8. If a surveyor asks me a question and I have no idea of the right answer, it won’t hurt to guess since I don’t want to look stupid.

True    False

9. According to the Centers for Disease Control, what is the most effective way to stop the spread of infection in health care settings such as nursing homes?


10. Survey results are kept private, and members of the public do not have access to the results of state inspections.

True    False

I have read this training handbook and realize that the job I do is of critical importance to the residents who live here, to my coworkers, and to the survey success of this facility.

Name: ___________________ Title: ___________________
Signature: ___________________________
Answer key

1. True
2. True
3. Always knock on the door
4. False
5. False
6. RACE = Rescue, Alarm, Contain, Extinguish
7. True
8. False
9. Handwashing
10. False

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