HOSPICE AIDE
ON-THE-GO
IN-SERVICE SERIES

VOLUME 3

JENNIFER KENNEDY, MA, BSN, RN, CHC
VOLUME 3

Hospice Aide
On-the-Go In-Service Series

LESSON BOOK

HCPro
a division of BLR
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Hospice Aide
On-the-Go In-Service Series

Accountability and Professionalism

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1
Objectives
Upon completion of this program, the hospice aide will be able to:

- Demonstrate personal accountability in the workplace
- Avoid unprofessional conduct
- Contribute strong communication and coordination skills to the hospice interdisciplinary team to promote accountability and professionalism throughout the organization

Overview
Accountability is a prominent buzzword in the business world but one whose meaning is seldom discussed in detail. Although associated with leadership, accountability extends to all personnel within a professional setting and is an especially high priority for healthcare professionals, whose work directly impacts the health and well-being of patients.

Accountability requires a commitment or promise to deliver a result by a set time and to take responsibility for that outcome, regardless of its success. Demonstrating accountability requires an individual to act with honesty and make decisions using justifiable logic. When individuals in the healthcare industry hold themselves accountable for their actions and the resulting outcomes, they can foster trust and respect within the workplace and indicate their capacity for professionalism toward patients and colleagues alike.

As a hospice aide, you must take accountability for the care of your patients, as well as understand and embody professionalism at all times. You must also be aware of your hospice’s specific standards for professionalism, because the reputation of your organization—not to mention the health and safety of your patients—hinges on staffs’ knowledge and execution of these expectations.

Content
Read the lesson 20 minutes
Read the case study 5 minutes
Complete “Think about it” 10 minutes
Complete the posttest 15 minutes
Feedback session 10 minutes
Supplemental Learning Activities

• Creating and maintaining a culture of accountability can be a challenge for any hospice, especially larger providers with many hospice aides. In a group, try to identify current problems that exist within your organization. Discuss the pathways and barriers to achieving accountability in these areas, and then brainstorm strategies for improvement.

• Develop role-play scenarios with your supervisor or other hospice aides that revolve around accountability and professionalism issues. In each situation, decide the best course of action for demonstrating these characteristics.

• Ask your supervisor whether your organization currently offers or could potentially develop a hospice aide mentoring program to enhance the education and demonstration of accountability among you and your colleagues.

• Ask your supervisor whether your organization would consider allowing hospice aides to become members of its Quality Assessment Performance Improvement committee.

Posttest Answers

1. d. All of the above

2. b. False

3. c. Do others seem to like me?

4. a. communicate your questions or concerns to your supervisor

5. b. False

6. d. Both b and c

7. b. Being on time regularly

8. c. Good grooming

9. a. Working at assigned locations

10. d. consult his or her organization’s policy regarding staffs’ ability to accept gifts
<table>
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<th>Date/Time Spent</th>
<th>Aide Participant</th>
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Facts
What it means to be accountable
Before you can work toward achieving accountability, you need to understand what the term means. Accountability is a commitment to others to deliver and stand by a specified result. It is measurable, observable, and time-sensitive.

Accountability sometimes requires an individual to engage others for help with keeping commitments. Some people find depending on others to be the most challenging aspect of demonstrating accountability.

Creating a culture of accountability
Being accountable is a choice people make. Hospices that encourage independent action, celebrate success, and ensure that their employees learn from mistakes are taking the first steps toward creating a culture of accountability.

Accountability cultures often avoid focusing on punishment—a disciplinary strategy that can cause people to avoid risks and shirk responsibility. Instead, these cultures promote learning, performing, and improving. To achieve organization-wide accountability, hospices need their employees to take responsibility for their choices and the outcomes they produce.

Personal accountability
Accountability—which can exist in all aspects of our lives—involves making and keeping commitments. It’s unrealistic to expect accountability from others if you don’t practice it yourself. To determine whether you currently demonstrate accountability to others, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I regularly do what I say I will?
- Do others believe they can count on me?
- Do I make sure that I understand what is expected of me?
- Does my work meet my organization’s established standard of timeliness and quality?
- When my actions or decisions lead to an error or unanticipated result, do I step up and acknowledge my mistakes?
- Are my commitments realistic?

Key Terms to Aid Your Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>A measurable, observable, and time-sensitive promise to deliver a specific result and the commitment to take responsibility for the actual outcome, regardless of its success</td>
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<td>Accountability culture</td>
<td>A professional environment that perpetuates a sense of personal accountability for all employees while encouraging education, growth, and the celebration of improvement and success</td>
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<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Consistent, appropriate, and respectful behavior demonstrated by an employee, which often includes dressing in business attire; speaking cordially with others; arriving to work and related events on time; and holding oneself accountable for all choices, actions, and outcomes</td>
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• If I realize that I cannot keep a commitment, do I communicate this in a timely manner?
• Do I ask for help when making commitments and striving to honor them?

As a hospice aide, you are accountable for the care you provide to your patients and their families. Since hospice aides typically spend the most time with a patient compared to other members of the interdisciplinary team, you are in a perfect position to observe and report all patient changes—both big and small—to the nurse.

New hospice aides will often find themselves assigned to a task that they have never performed before or feel uncomfortable performing. An example could be when an aide is asked to empty a catheter drainage bag. If a hospice aide is unfamiliar or not skilled at performing the requested procedure, he or she cannot simply delay the task—a move that would put the patient’s well-being in jeopardy. Instead, the aide should communicate his or her concerns to a nurse or supervisor. Alternatively, the hospice aide could contact a nurse educator for further training on the procedure. Approaching others for help demonstrates that you hold yourself accountable for understanding your assignments and providing the best possible care to patients.

**Improving your communication style**

Because it can assist effective communication and help convey expectations, using thoughtful language is important for demonstrating accountability. Try incorporating the following communication approaches into your everyday interactions with patients and colleagues:

• **Communicate to overcome challenges.** When you are faced with challenges, it’s easy to turn to blame and excuses. But cultures of accountability discourage accusatory behaviors, which can fuel bitterness among team members and cause workers to lose sight of their goals. When challenges prevent you or a colleague from achieving a commitment, start a productive discussion by first identifying what elements of the job were completed successfully to create a positive environment for generating new ideas and improvements.

• **Use your language and behavior to promote personal accountability.** Being accountable does not mean you can always accomplish everything you’re asked to do. Part of holding yourself accountable means learning to identify which requests you’ll have the time and resources to fulfill and only committing to those. Once you’ve committed to a task, continue using accountable language to help see it through to completion. To expand on an earlier example, a hospice aide who’s hesitant to empty a catheter drainage bag should ask for extra training from a nurse or the organization’s nurse educator before agreeing to complete the task. Once the aide receives this additional education and feels more prepared, he or she can commit to emptying the drainage bag. However, if the aide runs into questions during the task, he or she should seek additional help from a supervisor or colleague to ensure the bag is emptied properly.
What it means to be professional

Hospice aides help uphold the culture of accountability within their organization by maintaining personal accountability in clinical settings and working with peers to honor commitments. Through these actions, they also display, in part, what it means to be professional.

In a clinical, team-oriented setting where workers share the goal of providing patients with the best possible care, professionalism is critical. Professionalism demands consistent, appropriate, and respectful behavior on the part of an employee. Actions that demonstrate professionalism include dressing properly; speaking in an appropriate fashion with peers, superiors, patients, and families; regularly being on time; and taking responsibility for all choices and behavior.

Hospice aides seeking to behave professionally should always abide by the golden rule: Treat others as you would like to be treated. If your loved one was receiving hospice care, how would you want to be addressed by visiting aides and nurses? If you served as your organization’s administrator, how would you want your staff members to carry themselves?

Because most hospice aides work in a patient’s home, they are expected to demonstrate very high levels of respect and sensitivity toward patients, as well as to their loved ones, belongings, schedule, and surroundings. Remember that you are on the patient’s “turf” when you provide care, and, accordingly, you should avoid actions that could be interpreted as rude or entitled. For example, always ask the patient or a family member if you may sit on a specific chair or sofa before doing so. Take extra time—especially during the first few visits—to explain to the patient and his or her family the purpose of your visit and how you will be providing care. Demonstrating such thoughtfulness and respect will help the patient and family become comfortable with having you in their home.

Clearly, acting in a professional manner is an acquired skill that takes dedication and practice to perfect. Most hospices have a formal code of conduct or ethics that can guide employees toward acceptable, professional behaviors. However, the expectations of professionalism may shift under certain circumstances, and depending on the level of detail provided by their organization’s policies, aides may face situations in which they will have to make snap decisions about how to act appropriately. For example, a patient’s culture, ethnicity, or family traditions may call for an aide to alter his or her typical salutation. When faced with split-second decisions like this one, it helps to have some understanding about the cornerstones of professional behavior.

Displaying professional qualities

There are several features of professional behavior that apply in nearly every workplace. For example, being pleasant and polite, demonstrating a strong work ethic, and possessing a desire to succeed at assigned tasks are qualities that all professionals should try to achieve.

Because healthcare workers play such critical roles in their patients’ lives, they are often expected to display additional qualities, some of which are described below:

- **Honesty.** Consistent demonstration of integrity and the ability to be trusted with the property and personal information of others.
• **Compassion.** Ability to sense others’ emotional states and sympathize with the experiences of illness, including suffering and fear.

• **Respect.** Demonstration of attitudes and behaviors that communicate concern for the well-being of others, such as honoring the feelings, beliefs, and experiences of different social and cultural groups and protecting the personal property and information of patients.

• **Self-motivation.** Ability to take initiative to complete assignments and improve skills, welcome feedback and learning opportunities, and value punctuality and the timely completion of tasks.

• **Good grooming.** Wearing of appropriate, neat, clean, and well-maintained clothing, use of minimal makeup and perfumes, and maintenance of nails that are clean and trimmed to comply with infection-control standards.

• **Patient advocacy.** The ability to avoid allowing personal beliefs or feelings to interfere with patient care; to provide care in a safe, competent manner after explaining what it will entail to patients; and to protect the confidentiality, dignity, and desires of patients.

**Avoiding unprofessional behavior**

There are some behaviors that most healthcare employers find unprofessional, such as arriving to work late or discussing personal problems with patients or their families. Some breaches of professionalism are so serious that they can result in legal or disciplinary action, such as:

• Verbally, physically, emotionally, or sexually abusing patients
• Failing to protect the confidentiality of patients or otherwise violating their rights
• Demonstrating negligence while performing duties
• Destroying property
• Stealing from a patient’s home
• Working while under the influence of alcohol
• Using illegal drugs
• Making personal calls on a patient’s phone
• Bringing unauthorized individuals into a patient’s home
• Taking control of the financial or personal affairs of a patient
• Being absent from work without notifying a supervisor
• Disrespecting supervisors, managers, and/or coworkers
• Refusing to work where assigned

Additional problems can arise in situations that seem positive on the surface, such as when a patient is so happy with the care a hospice aide has provided that he or she offers the aide a present or other reward. Understand and follow your
organization’s policy regarding staffs’ acceptance of tips or gifts from patients and/or their families to avoid inadvertently defying important rules.

To steer clear of these major lapses in professionalism, remember to perform only the tasks that you have been trained to do and are permitted within your job description. If you are not sure how to do something, ask your supervisor for direction.

**The Hospice Aide’s Role**

When it comes to professionalism and accountability, the hospice aide must consider all the people affected by the care he or she provides. As an aide, you probably interact with numerous diverse individuals over the course of a single day, including supervisors, nurses, other aides, patients, and patients’ family members or caregivers, all of whom reap tremendous benefits when you demonstrate professionalism and accountability. These individuals need to know that they can depend on you and that if they request something of you, you will deliver a timely result that meets or exceeds the standards of your organization.

Honoring such commitments is especially important when interacting with your patients, many of whom rely on more than just your clinical care. Patients deserve your sensitivity, attention, thoroughness, kindness, and expert completion of necessary procedures. By providing your patients with each of these essential elements of care, you are successfully conducting yourself as an accountable professional.

**Outcomes and the Hospice Aide**

By behaving properly; following through with designated tasks, procedures, and responsibilities; and maintaining a team-oriented, patient- and family-first attitude, hospice aides enhance their own standing within their organization while providing top-notch services to their colleagues and, even more importantly, their patients and these individuals’ families.

Consequently, hospice aides should strive to conduct every action in the patient’s home—and beyond—with professionalism and accountability. Your accountability is a direct reflection of your reputation as a professional, as well as that of your organization. If you strive to uphold high standards of professional conduct and remain accountable for all the work you accomplish, you will benefit yourself, your organization, and all the patients for whom you provide care.

**CMS’ Expectations**

CMS included regulations specifically for hospice aides in the 2008 update of the Medicare Hospice Conditions of Participation. All hospice aides should be aware of the contents of these regulations as well as any specific state regulations related to hospice aides or nursing aides in general.
Case Study

Tina is one of the most experienced and respected aides in her hospice program, while Jim, who was hired less than a month ago, is the newest aide at the organization. The hospice team manager instructed Jim to shadow Tina for a day. Jim spoke to Tina, and they selected a day that would give Jim an opportunity to go on two home visits with Tina so he could observe Tina’s interactions with patients and take notes on her routines and behavior.

Tina and Jim arrived five minutes early to their first home visit, which was with Mr. Cortland. Immediately upon entering, Tina removed her shoes and asked Jim to do the same, noting that Mr. and Mrs. Cortland prefer that people do not wear shoes in the house.

After leaving his shoes by the door, Jim took his first good look at Mr. Cortland and noticed how happy he appeared upon seeing Tina. Sitting up in his chair, he grabbed Tina’s hand—which was free from excessive jewelry and long fingernails—greeted her warmly, and said, “Just like always, Tina, you’re right on time!”

Tina said hello, introduced Jim to Mr. Cortland, and explained that Jim was the new hospice aide who would be helping her today.

Before providing any physical care, Jim noticed that Tina asked Mr. Cortland how he was feeling and if he had any updates to report. Tina also explained to Mr. Cortland the purpose of the visit, what care would be provided, and what she aimed to achieve.

On the way to their next visit, which was with Mrs. Putnam, Tina warned Jim that Mrs. Putnam could be difficult to work with given the pain she experiences as a result of her cancer. When they arrived—right on time—Mrs. Putnam would not make eye contact with Tina or Jim as she laid in her bed. Like she did with Mr. Cortland, Tina said hello to Mrs. Putnam, introduced Jim, explained the reason for her presence, and asked Mrs. Putnam how she was doing.

As an aside, Tina told Jim that she could tell by Mrs. Putnam’s body language that she was feeling intimidated by their standing in front of her. Tina sat down in a chair near Mrs. Putnam’s bed and asked Jim to sit in the other chair in the bedroom. Once both were seated, Jim noticed Mrs. Putnam visibly relax, and soon she spoke up to scold Tina for canceling their previous appointment. Jim knew that Tina had to cancel last week because of a family emergency, but Tina avoided sharing the details with Mrs. Putnam, instead apologizing sincerely for the cancellation and any inconvenience it may have caused her.
Think about it

1. Play the role of the observant Jim to decide whether Tina’s actions embody personal accountability. In general, would you consider Tina an accountable worker? Refer to the questions on pages 1-7 and 1-8 to help you reach your conclusion.

2. Cite specific examples of Tina’s actions during her visits with Mr. Cortland and Mrs. Putnam that you believe demonstrate accountability or professionalism. What makes them positive interactions? Were any of Tina’s behaviors unprofessional?

3. Based on Tina’s conduct, what behaviors should Jim incorporate into his own work as a new hospice aide?

Posttest

Directions: Read each question carefully, and then choose the best answer. Check the corresponding box on your answer sheet. Please do not write on the posttest.

1. Accountability is __________.
   a. a commitment to others to deliver and stand by a specified result
   b. measurable, observable, and time-sensitive
   c. a promise to take responsibility for the outcome of your actions, regardless of their success
   d. All of the above

2. Cultures of accountability frequently use punishments to promote behavioral changes among staff.
   a. True
   b. False

3. Which of the following is NOT one of the questions hospice aides should ask themselves to determine whether they practice personal accountability?
   a. Does my work meet my organization’s established standards of timeliness and quality?
   b. Do others believe they can count on me?
   c. Do others seem to like me?
   d. Do I regularly do what I say I will?
4. If you are asked to perform a task or procedure that you are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with, you should _________.  
   a. communicate your questions or concerns to your supervisor  
   b. delegate the task to someone else  
   c. delay the task or procedure  
   d. None of the above

5. To be professional, you should interact with every patient in the same exact manner, regardless of differences in their cultures, ethnicities, or family traditions.  
   a. True  
   b. False

6. When providing care in a patient's home, a hospice aide should ___________.  
   a. walk around like he or she owns the place  
   b. take time to explain the purpose of his or her visit and what care he or she plans to provide  
   c. be respectful of the patient  
   d. Both b and c

7. Which of the following is a professional behavior?  
   a. Neglecting assigned duties  
   b. Being on time regularly  
   c. Relying solely on yourself when completing tasks  
   d. Making personal calls on a patient's phone

8. Wearing appropriate clothing is an example of which of the following qualities associated with professionalism?  
   a. Honesty  
   b. Compassion  
   c. Good grooming  
   d. Patient advocacy
9. Which of the following behaviors should hospice aides demonstrate?
   a. Working in assigned locations
   b. Stealing from the patient’s home
   c. Working while under the influence of alcohol
   d. Bringing other people to the patient’s home without asking

10. Before accepting a gift from a patient, a hospice aide should __________.
    a. hug the patient and say “Thank you!”
    b. ask for a tip instead
    c. ask the patient’s family for permission
    d. consult his or her organization’s policy regarding staffs’ ability to accept gifts
Multiple Choice Answer Sheet

1. □ a □ b □ c □ d
2. □ a □ b
3. □ a □ b □ c □ d
4. □ a □ b □ c □ d
5. □ a □ b
6. □ a □ b □ c □ d
7. □ a □ b □ c □ d
8. □ a □ b □ c □ d
9. □ a □ b □ c □ d
10. □ a □ b □ c □ d

Instructor’s Comments/Signature

Signature ____________________________, RN    Date ____________________
Hospice Aide Record

This is to certify that

__________________________________________

has successfully completed the in-service program for hospice aides titled

__________________________________________.

This training included ________ hours of instruction and testing.

INSTRUCTOR:

______________________________

DATE:

______________________________

The “Hospice Aide On-the-Go In-Service Series” is an HCPro Training Program
Each year, hospice aides must fulfill the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ (CMS) requirement to complete 12 hours of in-service training. This volume comprises 12 comprehensive lessons on the timeliest topics in hospice care to deliver the relevant education hospice aides need to satisfy CMS’ annual in-service training requirement and address current industry issues.

Hospices can use the complete set of lessons, which each contain a planning guide, attendance sheet, and a comprehension test, to provide an entire year of thorough training for their aides. Each lesson is designed for self-study and/or classroom use, offering the flexibility to train in any setting and the convenience for aides to learn at their own pace.

**THIS BOOK PROVIDES:**

- The education hospice aides need to satisfy CMS’ annual 12-hour in-service training requirement
- One-hour lessons, each containing a comprehensive fact sheet that includes an overview of relevant subject matter, a descriptive case study, supplemental learning activities, and a 10-question posttest to measure aides’ comprehension of the topic
- Interactive lesson components to facilitate discussion and help educators assess aides’ knowledge
- A practical format including ready-to-copy pages for every lesson, attendance logs, and certificates of completion that can be modified for each participant
- Single-site reproduction rights that allow hospices to reuse the lessons again and again