

Observing, reporting, and documenting client status and the care or service provided, including changes in condition and abilities

One of the most important services a home care agency can provide their clients and families is regular, updated information about their loved one.

European Service Home Care supervisors regularly talk to husbands, wives, sons, daughters and other relatives to report on their loved one's condition and make adjustments, if needed, to client care plans. But in order to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information, supervisors rely on the observational and reporting skills of their caregivers.

When caregivers meet their clients for the first time, they begin the process of learning about them and developing a general baseline which is used in the future to identify any changes that may have occurred.

Caregivers learn about their clients from their supervisors, the care plan and from the clients themselves. From that point forward, caregivers observe their clients from day to day, paying particular attention to changes in their daily routines, behavior, ways of communicating, appearance, general mood or manner and physical health. Observing means more than just watching for obvious changes; it also means being sensitive to even subtle changes. This is an ongoing process that takes place every time a caregiver is on duty. It requires that caregivers use all of their senses – sight, hearing, touch and smell. It means taking the time to speak with clients, ask questions and really listen to their answers through words and body language. A good listener hears more than just words. A good listener also pays attention to other forms of communication such as body language and facial expressions.

Sometimes there are signs that suggest a change has occurred in a client's emotional, physical or mental status.

Other times symptoms of the change may be present. Signs are what can be observed; symptoms are what a person experiences or feels. Signs or symptoms can suggest that the status of your client has changed quickly due to a medical occurrence such as a stroke or injury, or slowly due to a gradual shift in their physical or mental condition.

Caregivers also watch for changes to their clients' mental or emotional state including changes in behavior, mood, communication, overall appearance, and hygiene. When changes are observed, caregivers are told to contact their supervisor. Their observations and report provide the information supervisors need to decide the next step, which may be to plan a visit from the supervisor or on-staff nurse, or contact a family member.

Caregivers are also asked to contact their supervisor immediately to report:

- Any sign of injury, including falls
- Any illness or rapid change in condition
- An emergency, crime or dangerous situation

If a caregiver sees signs that the client may be the victim of abuse or neglect, they must immediately report to the Department of Social and Health Services to Adult Protective Services (APS) at 1-866-800-1409, then notify a supervisor.

Caregivers get to know their clients by spending time with them and learning their baseline.

When a client has moved away from their baseline, Family Resource caregivers are trained to pick up the phone and call their supervisor. And what if everything is just fine and going great? Well, we like to hear that too – and so do our client families.

Documentation and reporting of observed changes in functional ability and mental status demonstrated by the client is especially important by caregiver as it can be used as important evidence for further investigation of client's condition.

Proper documentation of caregivers is important because:

- It helps in determining the likely cause of the dementia.
- It provides information that can be utilized by subsequent clinicians.
- Poorly documented information can lead to a loss of information, which can result in misdiagnosis and harm.
- It allows each staff member to understand the medical history of the individual and any interventions that are relevant to their care and support needs.
- This history can then be used to direct future interventions and actions.