

Action Pact, Inc.
www.Culturechangenow.com

Culture Change in Practice

The way to residents' hearts...

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Posted by LaVrene Norton at 10:48 AM



"Culture Change in Practice" is our own weblog where people can become involved in a conversation about Culture Change as it is practiced by professionals in real nursing homes. Feel free to join the conversation, or post a comment about something you have learned on your journey.

www.culturechangenow.com/weblog.html

We talk a lot about what "home" means to each of us. For me, and I'm sure I am not alone in this, food plays a big part. At my home I keep all our favorite snacks on hand, we usually eat dinner around 8 pm, we love to have friends over for dinner and I admit that about once a month I have ice cream for breakfast. Do residents in nursing homes have opportunity to do any of those things? Not in most places, but offering choices in dining is often one of the first steps for culture change.

One of the reasons this is such an important and early step is that there are countless ways to accomplish it. This process will help you get started.

Put together a Dining Action Team. In addition to folks from dietary, include some of those who work closest with the elders (CNAs for example) and even a couple residents. This way you will get lots of good feedback about elders' dining desires.

Next the team starts exploring the options. They range from a snack pantry to household kitchens open 24/7. Even if you decide to shoot for the household kitchen, a large and

lengthy project, you can start right away with a snack pantry. Talk to elders about what they like for snacks. By hallway (neighborhood, household or other small group) make a grocery list and stock those favorites. Let the elders know that snacks are available whenever they like. The pantry itself can be a small refrigerator, microwave and cupboard in a small, under-used space, or even simply a small cupboard centrally located near the residents it serves.

Other great options to get you started include:
Continental breakfast for early risers
Made to order eggs
Extended dining hours so people can choose when they eat
Using residents' favorite recipes to make special treats

The action team brainstorms some ideas and then does some more brainstorming to figure out how to pull it off. This [handout](#) offers some questions for the team to tackle. Culture Change Now magazine vol. 3 (<http://www.actionpact.com/mag-ish3.html>) also has lots of great info on planning new dining initiatives including regulations and hosting friends and family. Check your state regulations to make sure you comply. Whatever you decide to do, keep in mind eating is so much more than just nourishing our bodies. It nourishes our soul with traditions, communion, memories and comfort.

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The way to residents' hearts... Handout

Use these questions to help guide your team discussion on dining. Maybe you have already made some changes or maybe some seem impossible, but you'll never know for sure until you start exploring. Remember to check your state regulations.

WHAT RESIDENTS EAT

How are menus decided now?

How could the residents have more say?

How can we care plan around restrictive diets so that elders can still have their favorite foods?

How could we get residents involved in food preparation?

How could we stock snacks for residents? How would residents have access to the snacks?

WHEN RESIDENTS EAT

Could we offer continental breakfast for early risers?

Could we expand meal hours so that residents have more choice in when they eat?

Could we offer additional meals such as afternoon "tea" or bedtime snack?

Is there a way residents could have access to snack cupboard or refrigerator whenever they want on their own?

Could we have a kitchen open 24/7?

HOW RESIDENTS EAT

Is there an under-used space where a few residents who are able to get there on their own could meet for breakfast, tea or coffee, or cocktails?

Is there a space where a resident could host family members for a meal?

Can we have potlucks with families (of residents and staff)?