

Preface

Feeding Assistant Curriculum

On September 26, 2003, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published the final regulations for requirements for paid feeding assistants in Long Term Care Facilities (Federal Register/Vol. 68, No. 187/Friday, September 26, 2003/Rules and Regulations, page 55539.

The regulations are found under 42 CFR 483, Subpart B §483.35, 483.75, Subpart D §483.160; and 42 CFR 488 Subpart E §488.301.

The regulations are effective October 27, 2003 and stipulate that facilities must not use any individual employed in the facility as a feeding assistant unless that individual has successfully completed a state-approved training program for feeding assistants, as specified in the regulations.

The regulations do not apply to licensed nursing personnel, or nurse aides. They do not apply to volunteers, families, or friends. However, any facility employee who feeds residents, if only for a short time each day or occasionally, must successfully complete state-approved feeding assistant training because the individual is functioning as a feeding assistant. This includes individuals whose services at the facility may be paid under contract with another employing agency.

A facility must maintain a record of all individuals, used by the facility as feeding assistants, who have successfully completed the state-approved curriculum for feeding assistants.

A facility must ensure that a feeding assistant feeds only those residents who have no complicated feeding problems. Complicated feeding problems include, but are not limited to, difficulty swallowing, recurrent lung aspirations, and tube or parenteral/IV feedings.

The facility must base resident selection for being fed by a feeding assistant on the charge nurse's assessment and the resident's latest assessment and plan of care.

A feeding assistant must work under the supervision of a registered nurse (RN) or licensed practical nurse (LPN).

In an emergency, the feeding assistant must call a supervisory nurse for help using the resident call system.

To meet minimum federal requirements, a program must consist of at least 8 hours of a state approved training course for feeding assistants. The course must meet the requirements of §483.160 and must include the following:

- (a) Feeding techniques
- (b) Assisting with feeding and hydration
- (c) Communication and interpersonal skills
- (d) Appropriate responses to resident behavior
- (e) Safety and emergency procedures, including abdominal thrusts (also called Heimlich maneuver)

- (f) Infection prevention
- (g) Resident rights
- (h) Recognizing changes in residents that are inconsistent with their normal behavior and the importance of reporting those changes to the supervisory nurse

Facilities are already required by OSHA to provide this training prior to exposure to individuals with Bloodborne pathogens and on an annual basis, thereafter. The principles and application of gloving, gowning, mask and eyewear protection are not included in this curriculum. It is the responsibility of the facility to provide the appropriate training in applying and removing Personal Protective equipment (PPE) for any individual who needs this type of protection during feeding a resident. Material on Standard Precautions is limited to basic required application for all residents and does not address Droplet Precautions, Contact Precautions or Transmission-Based Precautions.

This curriculum is approved by the State of North Carolina for meeting the requirements of the regulations governing the training of feeding assistants. Additional components that expand the curriculum may be added, but not substituted. A minimum of 8 clock- hours of instruction, including skills competency, is required. All skills in this curriculum should be successfully demonstrated with instructor supervision prior to feeding a resident and prior to completion of the program. No attempts have been made to establish a test or grading system for successful completion. The primary instructor based on instructor evaluation and documented skills competency will determine successful completion of the program. The goal of the program is competency, not failure.

The course must be taught by qualified health professionals such as a Registered Nurse (RN) or Occupational Therapist. Other personnel with at least one year of experience in their fields may supplement the instructor.

Use of up-to-date textbooks is an important learning resource for students. It is recommended that instructors review several and select one that will provide resources to complement the curriculum.