

A LETTER FROM HOME

A NEWSLETTER FOR CAREGIVERS

YOU ARE THE EYES AND EARS OF YOUR AGENCY

When you take an assignment, be sure that you know:

- To whom do you report
- When to report
- What types of information must be written and what needs to be reported.

- Any specific observations that the health team needs to know (as an example, swollen ankles).
- The basic observations that you should always be aware of as you interact with the patient



How to be the eyes and ears of your agency.

Home health aides, homemakers, or personal care attendants spend more time with home care patients/clients than any other staff members. The nurse or therapist sees the patient during skilled visits to the home. The aide spends many more hours per week with the patient. You are usually the first person to detect a change in the client's health.

Observation of the patient and his/her environment is a vital part of your job. Observation begins the first time you see the patient. Observation includes more than just careful watching. Included are listening to the client, talking to the client, and asking the client questions. A usually talkative, Mr. Jones seems very quiet today. "Mr. Jones, You seem very quiet today. Are you feeling OK?" "Did you get enough sleep last night?"

Changes in the client's condition or appearance are very important. The client is in the same clothes that you put on him three days ago. Pay attention to complaints of pain when the client moves, discomfort, or complaints that do not seem to have a reason. Mrs. Smith is having difficulty getting out of her chair. She usually just "pops" up. You can observe physical changes such as shortness of breath, a skin rash, or swelling in the legs and feet.

Observation of family and friends is also important and may have great implications for the client's future care. The client's husband seems depressed and states that he has no time to "play cards with the guys."

Guidelines for Reporting and Documenting

Details of the client's condition

Though each client is different, you will be reporting different observations. Remember, not all observations are negative. There are basic guidelines for documentation and reporting:

- Be sure of your information
- Information must be complete

Example of Reporting and Documenting:

Mrs. McDonnell has a red raised area, the size of a quarter on her right, upper arm. The area is warm to the touch. Report made to nursing supervisor.

- Use Objective reporting ...facts and opinions without personal opinions ... this protects the client and enables the agency to deliver the best.
- Using objective reporting protects you from being held responsible for a possible mistake.
- Do not use your own personal opinion. This is called subjective reporting.
- Report ALL changes in the client's condition
- Report and record observations and events as soon as possible or you may forget the details
- Report events in the order in which they occurred.
- Report exact details
- Report and record calmly

Some tips to make documenting and reporting easier:

Mrs. Johnson was getting out of bed at 10 AM. She refused assistance. She slid to the floor and hit her head. She remained awake and there was no bleeding or bump seen. I called her daughter who helped me get her into a chair. Daughter stated, "Mom seems to be OK. If she complains about her fall, I will call the doctor." Incident reported to office at 10:30 AM. Client remained alert and talkative before I left at 10:45 AM.

- If you make a mistake in charting, draw a single line through the mistake and date and initial the mistake. Then record the correct information
- Always remember that if a task is not recorded, it is assumed that it was not done.
- Only report what you have personally observed.
- If the client or family reports something to you, make sure that you state who reported and what they reported.

Mr. Miller stated that he had a bad headache this morning, but that he did not have one now.

- Write in blue or black ink and LEGIBLY (clear and easy to read).
- Always follow your agency's policies on documentation and reporting.

You are important to your patient/client.

As the eyes and ears of your agency, you have a big responsibility to your agency and, most importantly your clients. Use your senses during your care. You may be the only person the client sees all week.