

Session 4: Solutions for Making the Nursing Home Built Environment as Safe as Possible during COVID-19

Key Takeaways:

- **Need to ensure basic practices to prevent and limit the spread of infections, promote a safe work environment, align COVID-19 prevention and management with Quality Assurance Performance Improvement plans.**
- Walking or environmental rounds includes going to a resident's room and bathroom (as well as areas such as common rooms, kitchen, laundry) with a structured focus, assessing the resident and environment for potential improvement opportunities and to prevent harm.
- Joys of Rounding may include building trust, gaining information from staff and residents, increasing awareness and accountability, improving morale and productivity, enhancing communication with staff and residents.

Being visible on the units during the pandemic promotes teams' accountability to manage risks that may contribute to COVID-19 spread. The following question set can be used to facilitate discussions and reveal opportunities across and within key members of the team, residents and visitors. Please consider using/adapting them in your next huddles or team meetings.

Questions by Content

Comprehensive Infection Prevention and Management Plan	Is there a section in your center's comprehensive infection prevention and management plan on how to evaluate the built environment, including resident rooms/bathrooms, common areas, laundry, kitchen, etc.? Have you observed instances in which non-compliance with safety regulations could lead to resident or staff harm? What do you believe is the most appropriate course of action in those situations?
Walking Rounds	Who is responsible for conducting walking (environmental) rounds, how often, and to whom do they report any findings? Have you observed or been part of walking rounds in your center and can you tell us about that?
Follow-Up Plan (monitoring over time)	Who do you believe are the best team members to participate in regular, routine environmental rounds and why? Do you believe that all relevant departments communicate effectively with one another related to environmental safety? If not, how would you propose changing methods of communication?
Improvement Concepts	Do you support daily Team Huddles related to COVID-19 for all staff and would you include a brief report from team members who have recently conducted walking rounds? Do people communicate openly and without being emotional or blaming anyone for safety concerns?

Critical Questions for Leadership

	Is accountability for regular, routine environmental surveillance clear in written policies and procedures? Is the frequency included, and the responsibilities of each person (role) on the team? Does leadership review the data, and how often? What actions are taken as a result?
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Key Concepts by Stakeholder Group

What do Medical Directors Need to know and discuss with the team?	Medical directors may need to confer with nursing, administration, housekeeping, maintenance, kitchen and laundry staff if there are questions about policies and procedures related to COVID-19 and environmental safety. Medical directors must be aware of the cleaning and disinfectants used in the center.
What do DONs need to know?	DONs must have reviewed the latest (current) CDC, CMS and state department of public health guidelines and regulations related to cleaning and disinfecting of the built environment, proper storage of chemicals and supplies, use of PPE. DON must review and monitor staff education related to environmental safety and potential harm.
What Do Nurses/CNAs need to know?	CNAs must know about proper use and storage of equipment and supplies in resident rooms, bathrooms and common areas. CNAs must be able to demonstrate safe practices when entering and leaving resident rooms, bathrooms, common areas. They must know how and when to communicate with leadership.
What does the interprofessional team need to know?	Team must demonstrate open, frequent, supportive communication across and within departments. Team must discuss environmental safety without blaming individuals for any lapses, must propose and test solutions. All team members must be prepared to 'stop the line' if a safety issue is identified or suspected.