



State of Tennessee Department of Health

Division of Health Care Facilities Administrative Policies and Procedures

Subject: Feeding Assistant Training Course

File No. 0236

Approved by: Katy Gammon Effective Date: 2/6/04
Katy Gammon, Director

PURPOSE: To provide nursing homes an opportunity to utilize any nonprofessional nursing home employee, including but not limited to activity staff, clerical, laundry staff, etc. to assist with feeding nursing home residents after successful completion of a State Approved Feeding Assistant Training Course.

POLICY/PROCEDURE: Paid Feeding Assistant Training Course

“Paid Feeding Assistant is an individual, other than a licensed nurse or other health care professional, or a volunteer or family member, who successfully completes a State Approved Feeding Assistant Training Course before feeding residents; and is paid by or under contract with a facility to feed residents in a long term care facility.”

1. A long-term care facility must not use any individual working in the facility as a paid feeding assistant unless that individual has successfully completed a State Approved feeding assistant training course. Any nonprofessional nursing home employee, including but not limited to nursing home administrator, social worker, activity staff, clerical, laundry or housekeeping staff, etc. may be considered a feeding assistant and may feed residents at mealtimes and/or provide snacks and beverages to appropriate residents if he or she has successfully completed a paid feeding assistant training course.
2. Primary instructor of a feeding assistant training course may be a Registered Nurse or a Licensed Practical/ Licensed Vocational Nurse, a Registered Dietitian, Licensed Physical Therapist, Licensed Speech and Occupational Therapist may be utilized when available to provide specialized support to the training instructor. Instructor or instructors for the feeding assistant training course must maintain a

current valid license/ registration to practice in the State of Tennessee; and have previous work experience in a long-term care facility.

3. A State Approved feeding assistant training course must include at a minimum the following curriculum content provided in at least an eight (8) hour training period:
 - a. Feeding Techniques;
 - b. Assistance with Feeding and Hydration;
 - c. Communication and Interpersonal Skills'
 - d. Appropriate Responses to Resident Behavior'
 - e. Safety and Emergency Procedures, including the Heimlich Maneuver;
 - f. Infection Control
 - g. Resident Rights
 - h. Diets, including but not limited to type and amount of food intake; and meal observation and actual feeding assistance to resident; and
 - i. Recognizing changes in residents that are consistent with their normal behavior and the importance of reporting those changes to the supervisory/ charge nurse.
4. Upon completion of the feeding assistant training course, the instructor or supervisory/charge nurse must verify in writing the successful completion of the course, including a competency evaluation of the individuals feeding skills. The process for evaluation of successful completion of the course must be included in the materials submitted to the department for review and approval.
5. The long-term care facility must maintain a record of all individuals used by the facility as paid feeding assistants, who have successfully completed a State Approved feeding assistant training course.
6. Paid feeding assistants must be capable of recognizing an emergency situation and of responding appropriately using the resident call system and/or other means to summon a supervisory/charge nurse for assistance.
7. Resident selection for feeding by paid feeding assistants must be based on the charge nurse's clinical assessment of the level of competency required to safely feed the resident and the residents' most recent comprehensive assessment (MDS) located in the resident's medical record. The resident's plan of care/ care plan must document the use of paid feeding assistant as an approach to care.
8. Paid feeding assistants shall assist only those residents identified as having no complicated/ complex feeding or swallowing problems. A complicated feeding problem includes but is not limited to, recurrent lung aspirations, difficulty swallowing, tube feedings or parenteral/ intravenous feedings.
9. Paid feeding assistants shall not perform any other nursing or nursing-related

tasks.

10. Paid feeding assistants shall work under the general supervision of a licensed nurse, and shall not be included in nurse staffing hours/requirements. Paid feeding assistants may be utilized at any time in which supervision requirements are met.
11. There is nothing in this policy to preclude paid feeding assistant from providing snacks, water and/or other liquids to residents who meet criteria as determined by the charge nurses' assessment, resident assessment and inclusion of same in the resident's plan of care.
12. Long-term care facility is responsible for checking to ensure that individual's used and/or trained as paid feeding assistants are not listed on the State Abuse Registry. Criminal background checks are required, in accordance with State law, and shall be performed prior to or within seven (7) days of employment.
13. An individual who has successfully completed a paid feeding assistant training course and has not worked in a long-term care facility as a paid feeding assistant for a period of one (1) year shall not be used as a paid feeding assistant in a long-term care facility until the individual successfully completes another paid feeding assistant training course.
14. Volunteers and family members remain exempt from these requirements. Volunteers, however, may take the training if they so desire; but there is no requirement that they do so.
15. A Stat Approved Paid Feeding Assistant Training Course is not subject to re-approval provided that the Nurse Aide Training Manager is notified, in writing, of any changes in curriculum and/or instructor or instructors.
16. The long-term care facility, organization, or other governmental or vocational entity with a State Approved feeding assistant training course must notify the department and receive approval of subsequent changes in curriculum and/or instructor(s) of the course.
17. A long-term care facility, employee, organization, governmental or vocational entity seeking approval of a paid feeding assistant training course shall make application of the Department of Health, Nurse Aide Training Program Manager and shall submit required documentation. Application shall include: (a) curriculum plan for each topic listed in this policy; and (b) the name and qualifications of the instructor or instructors.
18. The Nurse Aide Training Program Manager shall approve an application of a paid feeding assistant training course that demonstrates compliance with the requirements of this policy. Approval or denial will be determined within thirty (30) days of receipt of required course content; and a letter of approval will be

mailed to the applicant. Applicants will be contacted immediately and informed of documents needed, if approval cannot be granted due to incomplete submission.

19. A paid feeding assistant training course may be subject to withdrawal if:
 - a. The course is not operated in compliance with this policy or the approved training course/curriculum plan; or
 - b. The training course is operated by or in a long-term care facility in which the license of the long-term care facility has been revoked.

20. Withdrawal of approval of a paid feeding assistant training course is not subject to appeal, but the provider of the paid feeding assistant training course may re-apply.