COMPETENCE WITH COMPASSION

An Abuse Prevention Training Program for Long Term Care Staff

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BACKGROUND

CARIE, the Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly, founded in 1977 is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization dedicated toward improving the quality of life for the frail elderly. Since 1989, CARIE has been working to provide meaningful, useful abuse prevention education for all long term care staff. With funding from the Retirement Research Foundation, CARIE developed, tested and evaluated an innovative training curriculum that addresses issues that can precipitate abusive behavior and provides proactive, preventive solutions.

The curriculum, entitled, “Competence With Compassion: An Abuse Prevention Training Program for Long Term Care Staff,” is designed to be interactive, dynamic and practical. Concepts are presented in a straightforward manner with an emphasis on group discussion and practice. Throughout training, trainees are encouraged to share specific, day-to-day examples of challenging caregiver situations. The group works together to generate possible interventions based upon information acquired from each training module.

GOALS

The overall goals of “Competence With Compassion: An Abuse Prevention Training Program for Long Term Care Staff,” are three-fold:

✓ To increase staff awareness of abuse, neglect, and potential abuse in long term care settings.
✓ To equip staff with appropriate conflict intervention strategies.
✓ To reduce abuse in long term care settings, thus improving the quality of life for residents.

These goals are accomplished through the completion of three major phases:

✓ Development of specialized on-the-job prevention training curriculum for nurse aides in long term care facilities
✓ Testing, evaluating and revising training curriculum for nurse aides in long term care facilities.
✓ Provision of “Train the Trainer” workshops for long term care professionals and dissemination of the training materials throughout the United States.
“Competence With Compassion: An Abuse Prevention Training Program for Long Term Care Staff,” is a six module program written in an informal, non-technical style. Trainers are expected to modify the sessions to accommodate the educational level of the participants and to individualize events or issues arising within a specific facility. The following provides a listing of topics are covered in the program:

Module I: Introduction
- History and philosophy of training
- Key goals of the workshop
- Introduce participants
- Warm-up exercise

Module II: A Look at the Work We Do
- $10,000 Pyramid Game: Encourages open discussion, group interaction, and reflection of experiences of being a professional caregiver.
- Provides overview of barriers to quality care and lists potential risk factors for abuse and neglect.

Module III: What is Abuse?
- Definitions of abuse
- Reporting abuse
- Residents who exhibit challenging behaviors

Module IV: Why Abuse?
- Residents At Risk for Abuse
- Staff At Risk to Abuse
- Managing Stress

Module V: Case Scenario “At the End of the Day”
- Show and discuss the videotape
- Review abusive situation from different perspectives
- Develop strategies to defuse potentially abusive situations

Module VI: Conflict Management
- RETHINK- a conflict management technique
- Application of conflict management skills
• Skill demonstration with conflict management technique

Module VII: Wrap up and Evaluation
• Review topics covered in workshop
• Reinforce main point
• Provide opportunity for feedback from participants

MEASURING SUCCESS/EVALUATION DATA

Initially, the curriculum was tested in 10 nursing homes in the Philadelphia region representing a cross section. Staff was randomly selected from all three shifts, proving a representative sample for each facility. A total of 211 nursing assistants participated. A pre-test/post-test design was used to evaluate the training.

The following description of results is taken from “A Model Abuse Prevention Program for Nursing Assistants,” published in *The Gerontologist*, 1993, by Karl Pillemer, PhD and Beth Hudson Keller, MA.

Before training began, participants completed a questionnaire that covered the following areas: frequency of abusive behaviors by staff, aggression against staff by residents; number of conflicts with residents in the preceding month; and an attitudinal item asking whether the respondent agreed that residents are like children and “need discipline from time to time.”

Rates of self-reported abusive behaviors on the pre-test were relatively high. In the preceding month, 51% of staff reported that they had yelled at a resident in anger; 23% had insulted or sworn at a resident; 8% had threatened to hit or throw something at a resident; 17% had excessively restrained a resident; 10% had pushed, grabbed, or shoved a resident; 2% had slapped a resident; and 1% had kicked or hit a resident with a fist.

The post-test was conducted 2 months after the training program. In addition to repeating the items on the pre-test, the post-test asked respondents directly about their satisfaction with the training. The participants’ evaluations of the training were overwhelmingly positive. Ninety-three percent reported that the material was relevant to their own experiences. Participants were not offended or threatened by open and frank discussion of resident abuse; 75% responded that they were very comfortable with the training topics. Many trainees volunteered the option that issues
of abuse and neglect should be openly discussed more frequently.

For the 114 nursing assistants who completed both the pre-test and post-test, a number of positive changes were noted. On the attitudinal item, the percentage of persons agreeing that nursing home residents are like children in need of discipline dropped from 56% to 37% (Wilcoxin test, p<.001) The mean of the conflict scale dropped from 16 to 14 (t test, p<.02) and all of the individual conflict items were significantly lower at the post-test. Staff also reported reductions in resident aggression toward themselves. This is an indication of the success of the training since the curriculum addressed how to avoid or defuse conflicts with residents before the resident becomes aggressive. Finally, self-reported abusive actions by staff declined after training. The mean score on the abuse scale dropped from 2.1 to 1.6 (t test, p<.07). Reductions occurred on all the major abuse variables after the training.

The evaluation of training has continued as the curriculum has been refined and strengthened. Over the past three years, CARIE has embarked on a project to train all staff in nine facilities owned/managed by a Philadelphia-based company. Karl Pillemer recently released his findings from three facilities which received training in 1997. While results continue to be reported similarly to the early training, the most striking change between pre-test and post-test occurred on the scale of conflict. The amount of reported conflict with residents dropped between Time 1 and Time 2. This scale asks residents how often they have conflicts with residents on a variety of topics. The mean of this scale was 12.4 at Time 1 and 7.6 at Time 2, a change that is significant (p<.005). Reductions in conflict were noted on each individual item in the scale, and in particular on two items: conflict over visitors and conflict over eating.

The training program brought some very positive feedback, both in terms of its composition and relevance to staff work issues. Sensitive issues regarding abuse and conflict in the nursing home were raised during the training, and all of the participants reported that they felt comfortable discussing these topics. Respondents were overwhelmingly positive in their overall evaluation of the program, ranking it as either good (48.9%), or excellent (43.2%). A very small number (2.3%) considered the training program to be just average.

Most (80.7%) felt that the opportunity to ask questions or make comments was “just right.” Of those remaining, 2(2.6%) thought that there was “too much” time for comments and questions, and 6(7.7%) felt that there was not enough time for this. A majority of respondents (61.5%) found the training material “easily understandable;” over a third (37.2%) found the material “understandable.” Only one person reported that the material was “very difficult” to understand. All but one (98.9%) of participants found the videotape helpful to the program.
Respondents found the program topics very relevant to their job: when asked if they could relate the material covered to their own experiences on the floor, 90.6% said they could. Also, participants felt the program was worthwhile, with 98.9% reporting they would recommend this training program to other nursing assistants.

**FUTURE PLANS**

CARIE’s vision is to see the training curriculum, “Competence With Compassion,” utilized in every long term care facility regionally and nationally as a meaningful, concrete step toward improving the quality of care and life for all long term care consumers.

CARIE’s elder abuse prevention training program has been presented to professionals across the United States, in England, as well as at national conferences including the American Society on Aging and the Gerontological Society of America and has been published in peer review journals. CARIE’s work was honored in 1996 by the American Society on Aging and the Brookdale Center on Aging and in 1998 by the American Public Health Association.