

Module 2

COMMUNICATE

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Hello and welcome to Module 2 of the **STRAIGHT LINE** training program. This module is called COMMUNICATE.

The benefit of having an organized, efficient method of communication cannot be over-stated, as failure to communicate health issues is a leading cause for avoidable re-admissions.

In this module, Dr. Fuller discusses the role of a **Health Coordinator** – a position whose sole function is to communicate all health related issues for all residents. This position will help you to streamline your communication across the board, creating an efficient process throughout your residents' journey.

Communication is the most frequent roadblock to connecting a resident with a doctor. Communication of resident health issues must be optimized not only:

- *within* your community among various staff members, but also
- between your community and various members of the healthcare system *outside* of your community.

Every assisted living community knows the frustration and time consumed when calling a doctor's office or pharmacy and being put on hold or going through a lengthy phone tree and then having to repeatedly explain your reason for calling before finally being connected to the person who can help you.

Well, these members of the healthcare system experience the same frustration when calling assisted living communities. So not uncommonly, callers from either of these settings will simply "give up and hang up," and the problem that initiated

the call goes unresolved or at best, gets delayed. The time that is wasted with multiple calls like this throughout the day can never be recovered. That's why it's so important to streamline communication by removing this common roadblock.

This will help ensure that health issues will be addressed in a timely manner, and it's what provides the greatest chances for interrupting declining health and reducing avoidable ER visits, hospitalizations, and re-admission for your residents.

The ***STRAIGHT LINE*** approach is to simplify communication and make it as efficient as possible. With that in mind, we suggest that you create a full time position of a **Health Coordinator**. The person in this position would be totally dedicated to triaging, communicating, and scheduling resident health issues with appropriate individuals both within and outside of your community.

Removing this responsibility from multiple individuals who are often involved in passing along resident health information will streamline your communication, reduce errors, increase communication accuracy and efficiency, and remove this distraction from other employees.

We also recommend the following:

- Train your receptionist when answering incoming calls to your community to immediately triage all health-related calls to your Health Coordinator.
- The Health Coordinator should use a simple, concise form to assure accurate and effective health related communications with all encounters. When communicating with doctors or other health providers outside of your community, your Health Coordinator should provide the following, easily obtained information in a concise format:
 - o A brief description of the concern.
 - o **Current** vital signs

- o A list of current medicines.
- o A problem list or prior medical history. A recent doctor's note or History & Physical report would likely contain this information.
- If there is any question about a resident's status or condition, make an appointment with the doctor at the earliest opportunity.
- The Health Coordinator should assure that all communication (such as notes from doctors, specialists, pharmacies, etc.) is documented in the residents' charts.
- Identify the primary contact person in your doctors' offices. Make sure that your Health Coordinator and these "primary contacts" in the different doctors' offices are familiar with each other, as this will greatly facilitate and expedite communication.

Finally, as this COMMUNICATE module is implemented in your community, we are confident that you will discover the value of simple, streamlined, and direct communication of all resident health issues.

And always keep in mind your overall goal: To establish and maintain a direct, **STRAIGHT LINE** resident-doctor connection.