SUCCESS WITHIN REACH

QAPI TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NURSING HOMES

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QAPI was an abstract concept for a long time. Now that official guidelines have been defined and nursing homes are moving deeper into the planning and implementation phases, a lot of facilities are realizing they don't know the best route to QAPI success. Many are unsure how to write a QAPI plan that they will be able to implement. It is not surprising that nursing home teams are feeling overwhelmed. Planning and implementing an effective program is a very detailed process, and there is a lot of pressure to do it right. Below are some of Primaris' tips for successful QAPI program development and implementation.

START BY EXAMINING INTERNAL PROCESSES. Build a committee with the right players. As part of phase one of QAPI (that ended in November of 2016) nursing homes were supposed to have identified their internal QAPI team. In order to meet this requirement, most nursing homes outlined plans to build teams made up of owners, directors, other upper management and staff. Primaris works with nursing homes to further define roles for team members and to make sure that everyone understands how to contribute to quality improvement efforts. Often this process reveals that nursing homes have neglected to include residents and families as part of their QAPI committees. But family members and residents should be included so that all perspectives are represented and QAPI plans are truly patient-centered. That is why Primaris' first tip for successful QAPI program development is to build a QAPI committee which includes feedback from residents and family members.
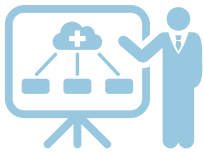
COMPLETE A THOROUGH ASSESSMENT. Knowing where to start can be difficult when embarking on any large-scale process overhaul. Conducting an initial comprehensive quality assessment is a good way to give direction to QAPI efforts. Primaris always recommends an evaluation as an early part of QAPI planning, and we offer nursing homes assistance with quality assessments. Once a nursing home performs an assessment, it can leverage the findings to pinpoint low-performing areas and opportunities for quality improvement. These insights can then be used to steer QAPI planning and execution.

PERFORM A DILIGENT DATA REVIEW. Reliable data is essential when working to make quality improvements. Therefore, nursing homes should review how they collect data from different sources and make sure that valuable information is being captured correctly. Once nursing homes are confident their data is accurate, the next step is to perform a data review to learn more about the challenges impacting residents, and facilities overall. Any facility that is not comfortable working with data (or lacks expertise in this area) should get support from an experienced vendor that offers data analytics and root-cause analysis.
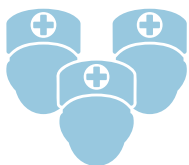
DRAFT A PLAN THAT CAN BE EASILY IMPLEMENTED. The process of writing a QAPI plan can be simple, challenging, or somewhere in the middle. There are several inexpensive or free templates available that can be used to quickly put together a QAPI plan. These tools are helpful and generally cover the main areas CMS has identified as being essential for QAPI planning. What these tools do not do is automatically customize a QAPI plan, or provide instructions on how to apply the plan across an organization. It is important for nursing homes to think ahead when writing QAPI plans so the final product is something that can be easily implemented. Some nursing homes might be able to draft an effective QAPI plan on their own by simply using templates, while other facilities require more support and are better off having someone experienced in QAPI write their plan. Fortunately for nursing homes, Primaris offers QAPI services that range from providing tools to "do-it-yourself" to "Primaris-does-it-for-you" full-service programs.

COMMIT TO A COMPLETE CULTURE CHANGE. QAPI regulations are designed to create organization-wide change in nursing homes. Everyone working inside a facility must buy into quality and performance improvement plans, and make adjustments to routine processes. Getting everyone on board can be challenging. Nursing home owners and top-level leaders need to commit to a complete culture change, and lead by example. It helps to communicate the benefits of QAPI (and the consequences of failing to comply with QAPI) with everyone working inside a nursing home. It is also important that nursing home leaders make it clear that there is no end point or finish line for QAPI – quality assurance and performance improvement must be a continuous process and ongoing.

EVALUATE STAFF TRAINING READINESS. Telling staff they need to make adjustments and adopt new ways of doing things is one thing, but training them to make necessary changes leads to lasting improvements. Nursing homes should take time to evaluate their staff and provide QAPI training where needed. The act of doing this is much more effective than telling direct care staff and others to make changes without teaching them how and offering support.

PERFORM REGULAR REVIEWS. It may seem obvious, but the only way to know whether QAPI efforts are working is to evaluate progress. Semi-annual reviews (or even more frequent evaluations) can help catch issues that will earn citations and prevent five-star ratings.

SEEK EXPERT SUPPORT. Nursing homes can either try to navigate QAPI on their own, or get help from an experienced consultant. Companies like Primaris deal with QAPI on a daily basis and can provide support across every point of planning and implementation. When time, know-how, and resources are limited, it is smart for nursing homes to seek QAPI support.

QAPI IS MORE THAN A MANDATE.

As you think through the above recommendations, consider what is driving your QAPI efforts. Every nursing home that receives federal funding must establish a QAPI program, but compliance with CMS requirements should not be the only reason for pursuing a QAPI program. With a QAPI program in place, nursing homes can recognize benefits like reductions in care costs, reduced hospitalizations and readmissions, fewer citations, higher quality ratings, more engaged staff, and better quality of life for residents. In other words, implementing a QAPI program can significantly transform the quality of care and services your nursing home provides. This is the real reason nursing homes need to be laser focused on improving quality through QAPI. It is also the reason facilities need to make sure they are not just ticking the QAPI box – it is worth the effort to make sure QAPI is done right.

Nearly every nursing home can benefit from outside support at some point during QAPI program development. If you would like help with QAPI planning or implementation, contact Primaris today to learn about our QAPI solution and how we can support your facility.

FOR MORE CUSTOMIZED TIPS AND INFORMATION ON HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN INCREASE EFFICIENCY, CONTACT PRIMARIS TODAY.

*Some services under this arrangement may not be available in Missouri. Contact us today for more detail.