

## “BEST PRACTICE” SUGGESTIONS: Culinary & Nutritional Services

### Employees Self-Scheduling:

We have begun letting the staff get together in their specific area (i.e. cooks, dishwashers, etc.) and as a team, they produce their own schedules. We give them certain parameters (i.e. no overtime, equitable for all, etc.) that they must adhere to and they form the schedule. We review it and it is posted. I have found that this achieves a number of very desirable outcomes.

- It fosters teamwork. The group sits down together and as a team they plan the schedule. It is a great team building exercise, and has forced the group to bond. The benefits can be seen in many areas.
- It has reduced the number of call offs dramatically. If I have been a part of the process to schedule the group and I have given my stamp of approval to the schedule, then I am far less likely to call in knowing I helped develop the schedule and knowing someone else really needed that specific day off. This in turn has helped reduce overtime, has increased morale and has empowered the staff to be part of the process.
- It has freed up a manager, who may take a couple of hours per week to put together a schedule, and allowed him/her to focus their time more effectively in more important duties.
- It has helped staff understand budgeting and what goes into the process and why it is important. This has carried over into other areas of the budget as well.
- The staff feels as though they are truly respected for being given this responsibility. They have carried themselves with more authority and more professionally.

### Resident Kitchen Tours:

About each quarter throughout the year we schedule residents to come through and tour the kitchen. It is about an hour-long tour. The residents call for reservations. We limit the tour size to 8 residents per tour and we typically run 2 tours per day (morning and afternoon) until we have accommodated all residents interested. We have over the past year toured about ½ of our residents.

The benefits are tremendous. First and most important it opens the door to the residents and allows us to give them information that they never realized. Seeing how the operation works up close and first hand is invaluable. The resident will always picture a cook making soup at the range top with a small sauce pan, just like they did at their home.

When they come in and see a 60-gallon kettle, big enough for them to climb in, it is awe striking. They see things they have never imagined. The results are they have a much greater respect and pride in the kitchen. When they invite guests they speak proudly of “their” kitchen. If there is ever a problem with the meal or service, those residents who have taken the tour will help us do our job. I have heard residents explain to those who have not taken the tour, “I understand how that happened, I have been in the kitchen and it is amazing we get the meals we do get without more problems”. They will do our work for us. They go out and promote our dept. and food service. It means far more to other residents coming from another resident. I no longer have to explain why the resident had to wait 5 minutes longer than normal. The resident on the tour has explained it to them instead of me having to. It also makes the resident feel that we have nothing to hide and that we are pleased to open our kitchen to any and all. The benefits are truly remarkable. It also gives us an opportunity to share info. we may normally not be able to do. It gives us a chance to promote ourselves without it appearing as such. At the end of the tour we do a Q & A session and then each resident receives a certificate for having completed the tour. They are a great Marketing tool and great PR for the dept. and facility.

### Cooperative Efforts with Local Schools:

One of the most alarming health concerns in the United States is childhood obesity. It will afflict 75% of the children under 19 years of age. The C.D.C. reports that we will spend more this year on childhood obesity and related illness than we will on the fight against A.I.D.S.

We, as a facility have put our resources where our mouths are. We have gone into the local schools and worked with the teachers, teaching units on proper nutrition, making healthy choices, etc. We have developed units on all related subjects and work with the kids. They are taught about everything from caloric counts in foods to how different foods interact with each other. After the units are taught the kids actually plan a menu, based on healthy choices and then prepare the meal. They are required to plan a week’s worth of menus for home and help their parents prepare the meals. The feedback we have received from parents is great.

We have had great success with the program and since its inception I have received more and more calls about getting our facility involved with other schools. The benefits are obvious for the teachers and students. It is also a great community outreach and good PR for the facility. A true win-win situation for all.