



*The Florida Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
Innovation Exchange*

Submission

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Date of Submission:	5/17/05, Updated 9-15-08
Title of Innovation:	Elopement Drills
Topic for Submission: (Please choose a topic from the list included in the attached submission guidelines which best describes the innovation you are submitting.)	Topic: Quality of Care
Audience: (Choose one or more, as appropriate.)	<input type="checkbox"/> HUD Housing Communities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retirement Communities (CCRC or fee for Service) <input type="checkbox"/> Assisted Living Facilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nursing Homes

1. **Description of Innovation:** Please succinctly describe the innovative program or service, creative idea or best practice and the resulting benefits to your organization or the consumers you serve. Limit the narrative to 3 pages, excluding attachments such as forms.

Plymouth Harbor is a CCRC with a widespread campus, nestled between deep waters and a major road. The results of a frail, confused resident wandering off the grounds could be drastic. Although we have multiple programs and equipment in place to keep the residents safe, none of these are fool proof and elopement remains a possibility. Elopement in-services are common, but we found it difficult to carry out organized and effective searches in those infrequent times of need without realistic practice. The goal of this program is to minimize the risk surrounding elopement incidents to residents as well as the facility. Since implementing it, we have been able to fine-tune our procedures to improve search time, ensure all areas are searched properly, and to reduce panic reactions from staff.

- A stuffed animal, “Wander Bear,” serves as a surrogate resident and stays in a prominent place in the facility (ie Day Room). He has a chart at the nurses’ station containing “Responsible Party” information and a leave of absence form.

- The elopement drill begins when a designated staff person discreetly removes the bear from its spot and carries it somewhere on (or off) the unit. They monitor the time it takes for the staff to notice the bear is gone and to implement elopement-response procedures.
- The first staff member who notices that Wander Bear is missing begins the procedure for an elopement incident response. We have found a small, pre-announced prize to the first employee to notice Wander Bear missing increases the interest in this program.
- They immediately notify the charge nurse/supervisor who initiates the unit search.
- The supervisor will check the LOA book to determine that this is not a planned absence, then calls a “Code Green” over the intercom and all available staff to the nurses’ station, updates them and coordinates the complete search of the unit by dividing staff into manageable teams, checking all rooms, closets, offices, etc.
- If the bear is not located, the supervisor notifies the Front Desk Receptionist, and the Director of Nursing. If after hours, the D.O.N. will be called at home.
- The Front Desk Receptionist calls a “Code Green” to all departments and notifies Security of the missing resident.
- All available staff will begin a search of the entire facility and its grounds under the coordination of the Supervisor or DON. Departments required to respond include Health Services, Housekeeping, Activities, Maintenance, and Security. Each team will carry a radio and be assigned a specific area to search, and respond “Code Green, All Clear” when the bear is located.

In cases of resident elopement our policy continues as follows:

- If the resident is not located in 10 minutes of the facility and grounds search, the Supervisor will notify the police with a description of the resident, the Health Care Surrogate, and the Administrator on call if after hours.
- When the resident is found, the Supervisor will call “Code Green, All Clear” on the intercom and radio system.
- Third parties will be notified, including the physician, the Health Care Surrogate, and the police if applicable.
- The event is documented in the Medical Record and the Care Plan updated.
- The Risk Management Team reviews the incident.

2. **Budget:** Provide information about the annual budget or total cost of your innovation (if a one-time expense) and the number of staff or volunteers used to implement it. If your innovation did not require a budget or staff, please indicate.

There were no additional costs to the facility except for staff time. The Risk Management Committee spent a few hours writing the policy and procedures. Education drills are ongoing, including one hour Elopement in-services annually for all staff and surprise drills throughout the year for all shifts lasting approximately 15 minutes.

Additional Information:

We include staff from our small ALF in our SNF drills so they have some exposure but not for ALF residents.

We have experienced two types of situations in the last three years for which this program helped. First, at times a resident will leave the unit legitimately (i.e., with family) but not sign out. Rather than waste a great deal of time looking for them by calling all staff together immediately, information is pooled. More often than not, an ancillary staff member is able to give their location and save everyone time.

Second, we have had residents elope from the unit but not the actual campus. Our practice with search techniques allowed us to find those residents within the specified time frame before having to notify authorities by quickly utilizing all staff, coordinating a planned search and not backtracking over the same space. Our searches involve 16 acres and up to 25 stories tall and are completed within 15 minutes.