

Meeting Advancing Excellence Goals with The Eden Alternative®

Goal: Increase Use of Consistent Assignment

by Denise Hyde

Description & rationale: Consistent Assignment means that the same person takes care of the same individual every day he or she goes to work. Staffing this way lets meaningful relationships develop between the employee and the individual accepting support. This, in turn, promotes person-centered care planning and individualization of care practices. Both staff and residents are happier; early literature indicates improved quality of care and life. Working on this goal will provide nursing home employees with a standard definition of consistent assignment, tips to implement consistent assignment and a method to measure it. The result will be improved relationships between employees and residents and increased quality of care and life.

How The Eden Alternative strengthens this goal: Close and continuing contact between care partners (employee, Elders, and family members) strengthens the loving companionship needed to overcome the pain of loneliness. The Eden Alternative believes that home is created when relationships are strong, promote mutual growth, and occur in small numbers. The Eden Alternative has resources to support organizations in growing small, consistent teams of care partners who know each other well, can honor the preferences and choices of each individual, and develop skills to improve both quality of life and quality of care.

To support consistency of relationships across the community, The Eden Alternative has incorporated steps into the *Path to Mastery: The Art of Creating a Caring Community* and developed supportive resources to help organizations be successful. These steps and resources include:

- **Milestone 1** Steps, such as (1) Ensuring that key leaders are educated about the Eden Alternative Principles, (2) Encouraging leaders to get to know all care partners (Elders, employees, volunteers and family members), and (3) Ensuring leaders have a plan to reduce the use of temporary agency staff.
- The Milestone 1 Toolkit has tools to (1) Assist leaders in setting teams up for success, and (2) Promote employee retention.
- **Milestone 2** Steps, such as (1) Ensuring that education about the Eden Alternative Principles is shared with all care partners (Elders, employees, volunteers and family members), (2) Developing conflict resolution skills in all care partners, (3) Ensuring that formal leaders model health relationship building, (4) Encouraging formal leaders to build relationships with all care partners, (5) Making sure formal leaders develop a plan to create small, consistent teams of care partners within the larger organization, and (6) Stabilizing employee retention.
- The Milestone 2 Toolkit has tools to (1) Reduce conflict, (2) Strengthen teamwork through the development of care partnerships, and (3) Share leaders' stories about how they implemented consistent assignments.



- **Milestone 3** Steps, such as (1) Continuing to grow culture change expertise throughout the organization, (2) Enabling care partners (Elders, employees, volunteers and family members) to teach and grow each other, (3) Assigning all care partners to a team, (4) Growing skills within the teams, so they are empowered to support the daily needs of the Elders, (5) Redesigning the organizational chart to reflect the new relationships, and (6) Diminishing the artificial boundaries between departments and shifts.
- The Milestone 3 Toolkit has tools to (2) Guide leaders through the implementation of consistent assignment, (2) Share leaders' stories about building empowered teams, and (3) Assist leaders in creating empowered teams.
- **Milestone 4** Steps, such as (1) Fostering a caring community where all care partners are promoting and sustaining the well-being of all, (2) Blending roles among employee care partners, and (3) Developing strong caring teams, where care partners are accountable to each other.
- **Eden Alternative Warmth Surveys** and analysis tools. Surveys are recommended for use annually to assess the levels of optimism, trust, and generosity among all the care partners.
- The **GROWTH** Model is a six-step process model to help leaders develop a plan to create consistent assignment.
- The **Empowered Teams Training** gives employee care partners the skills they need to take full advantage of consistent assignment, strengthen relationships, and assume authority and responsibility for quality of care and quality of life with the Elders. In order for this curriculum to be successful, there has to be consistency in team membership.

Without close, continuous, caring relationships, it is impossible to realize the full potential of the Eden Alternative Philosophy. Consistency of relationships between employee and Elder care partners is woven throughout everything The Eden Alternative creates and teaches. Elders cannot experience a life worth living without it.