

CALASH Checklist

Use this **CALASH Checklist** when you visit a nursing home. Take a copy of this **CALASH Checklist** when you visit your loved one's home to ask questions about resident life, nursing home living spaces, staff, residents' rooms, hallways, stairs, lounges, bathrooms, menus and food, activities, safety, and care. Adapted from information found in www.medicare.gov and from the article "The Six Cares in a Senior's World" found in the Senior Care Focus newsletter No. 9, Early Winter 2013 edition (to read this newsletter and others see www.littlebrooknursinghome.com/news-and-media)

There are essentially "six kinds of care" that senior citizens minimally should receive whether at home, in hospital or in a nursing home. When in-depth, comprehensive care is well-provided, it contributes to a senior's quality of life—psychological and physical, dignity and happiness. This is particularly important for those seniors in nursing homes where care given by the staff, and not crystal chandeliers hanging in the entrance foyer or synthetically perfumed air, is what should be provided. The acronym **CALASH**, which helps us to remember the six kinds of care that protect and enhance a senior's life, includes "C" for **Clean**, "A" for **Active**, "L" for **Loved**, "A" for **Assisted**, "S" for **Safe**, and "H" for **Healthfulness**. If your loved one isn't receiving this kind of care, you should speak to the administrator of the nursing home first and tell him or her about the **CALASH of Cares** that you expect. Then, if unresolved, you should consider a change. Living in a nursing home is about living with peace, happiness, dignity, comfort and safety. Your loved one worked hard to earn excellent care. Below are definitions of each care in the **CALASH of Cares** seniors should receive and questions you should consider asking.

1. **CLEAN: Being Cleansed and Well Groomed**

One of the most telling signs of senior's well-being is if she looks, smells and feels clean. This type of care includes her personal hygiene—oral and body, her clothing and her room. For example, when she wakes, she should have help dressing, brushing her teeth, combing her hair and being freshened up. This should be done daily! The same standard applies to her bedroom and her entire residence. Accept no persisting smells, stains or messes. Seniors should not receive less as it is important for their well-being and health! Some additional questions you may ask are:

- a. Are the residents clean, well groomed, and appropriately dressed for the season or time of day? YES OR NO
- b. Is the nursing home free from overwhelming unpleasant odors? YES OR NO
- c. Does the nursing home appear clean and well kept? YES OR NO
- d. Does the resident look, smell and feel clean? YES OR NO
- e. Is the resident's clothing clean, teeth brushed, hair combed and generally freshened up? YES OR NO

2. ACTIVE: Being Up and Moving About

It's understood that seniors may not be as mobile as they once were, but that doesn't mean that they shouldn't be up and helped to move about, if they are able. Seniors should be encouraged to try to join others in activities, meals, walks and social gatherings. Seniors shouldn't be sitting around inactively in their bedrooms, hallways or other rooms. They should be participating in some sort of activity—physical and mental—like age-appropriate exercises, chess matches or an occasional outing to see a theatre play, for example. Some additional questions you may ask are:

- a. Can residents, including those who are unable to leave their rooms, choose to take part in a variety of activities? YES OR NO
- b. Are all common areas, resident rooms, and doorways designed for wheelchair use? YES OR NO
- c. Do residents have a role in planning or choosing activities that are available? YES OR NO
- d. Does the nursing home have outdoor areas for resident use? YES OR NO
- e. Is the staff available to help residents go outside? YES OR NO
- f. Does the nursing home have an active volunteer program? YES OR NO

3. LOVED: Feeling Appreciated & Part of A Family

A feeling of belongingness is a basic human need. Young or old we want to love and be loved. Nursing home seniors should be welcomed and be helped to feel comfortable with their caregivers and some of the other seniors—eventually establishing new extended, family-like relationships. At times, seniors just need to have their hand held or a loving glance to comfort them. It's amazing and uplifting to see seniors from all walks of life come together under one roof and be happy with each other's company! Some additional questions you may ask are:

- a. Is the nursing home located close enough for friends and family to visit? YES OR NO
- b. Does the relationship between the staff and residents appear to be warm, polite, and respectful? YES OR NO
- c. Does the staff wear name tags? YES OR NO
- d. Does the staff knock on the door before entering a resident's room? YES OR NO
- e. Do they refer to residents by name? YES OR NO
- f. Are there quiet areas where residents can visit with friends and family? YES OR NO

4. ASSISTED: Help is Always Available as Needed

As we age, our dexterity, strength and other abilities become altered: some assistance becomes necessary. This is why it is very important that the staff assisting your loved one is sensitive, attentive and responsive to his needs around the clock. Long-term, dedicated staff members can get to know the unique and special needs of each senior for whom they are responsible and help them dress in their favorite colored slacks, plant their favorite vegetables, or prepare their food a certain way. Tailored, personalized attention and help is what every senior should receive in a timely, respectful manner. Some additional questions you may ask are:

- a. Does a team of Nurses and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) work with the resident to meet his/her unique needs? YES OR NO
- b. Do CNAs help plan the care of residents? YES OR NO
- c. Is there a person on staff that will be assigned to meet the resident's social service needs? YES OR NO
- d. If a resident has a medical need, will the staff contact his/her doctor him/her? YES OR NO

5. SAFE: Expect and Enjoy a Safe Environment

Seniors should live in a home that is well-maintained and free of hazards and threats. They should be able to safely move throughout their residence without tripping over steps or snagging their shoes or walkers on carpeting. Their home should be well lit, warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, and they should have daily access to fresh air and sunlight, if wanted. Furthermore, seniors should be protected from intruders and other outside risks like auto exhaust fumes and noise from busy roads and highways. Some additional questions you may ask are:

- a. Is the temperature in the nursing home comfortable for residents? YES OR NO
- b. Does the nursing home have good lighting? YES OR NO
- c. Are the noise levels in the dining room and other common areas comfortable? YES OR NO
- d. Is smoking allowed? If so, is it restricted to certain areas of the nursing home? YES OR NO
- e. Are the furnishings sturdy, yet comfortable and attractive? YES OR NO
- f. Are there policies and procedures to protect residents' possessions, including lockable cabinets and closets? YES OR NO
- g. Does the nursing home check to make sure they don't hire staff members who have been found guilty of abuse, neglect or mistreatment of residents; or have a finding of abuse, neglect, or mistreatment of residents in the state nurse aid registry? YES OR NO
- h. Are exits clearly marked? YES OR NO
- i. Does the nursing home have smoke detectors and sprinklers? YES OR NO
- j. Are handrails and grab bars appropriately placed in the hallways and bathrooms? YES OR NO

6. **HEALTHFULNESS: Attended to Nutritionally, Medically & Physically**

Last, but not least, is the healthfulness of your loved one. That is, is the care that your loved one is receiving conducive to good health? Is she receiving her medication on time, every day, for example? Is she often seen by a geriatric physician? What about her nutritional requirements? If she suffers from a heart condition, is she prepared a low-salt, low-cholesterol diet? Does she have opportunities to engage in health-appropriate exercise? A senior's health care should be tailored to her needs and not generally administered. Review your loved one's needs and discuss them with the staff in order to determine if they are fully attending to them. This, after all, is why your loved one is in a home. Some additional questions you may ask are:

- a. Does the nursing home offer specialized services, such as a special unit for care for a resident with dementia, ventilator care, or rehabilitation services? YES OR NO
- b. Do residents have a choice of food items at each meal? (Ask if your favorite foods are served.) YES OR NO
- c. Can the nursing home provide for special dietary needs (like low-salt or no-sugar-added diets)? YES OR NO
- d. Are nutritious snacks available upon request? YES OR NO
- e. Does the staff help residents eat and drink at mealtimes if help is needed? YES OR NO
- f. Is there a licensed nursing staff 24 hours a day, including a Registered Nurse (RN) present at least 8 hours per day, 7 days a week? YES OR NO
- g. Has there been a turnover in administration staff, such as the administrator or director of nurses, in the past year? YES OR NO

Seniors have enjoyed long lives and some will need a nursing home to attend to their needs. These needs require unique, specialized assistance: assistance that only certified professionals—a nurse, a nurse's aide, a physical therapist, a dietary chef and a geriatric physician—can provide. It is very important that you see staff professionals working together to provide your loved one's **CALASH of Cares**. If you find that your loved one is not receiving all of the **CALASH of Cares**, then you should speak to the administrator of the nursing home first and tell him or her about the **CALASH of Cares** that you expect. Then, if unresolved, you should consider a change. Living in a nursing home is about living in peace, happiness, dignity, comfort, safety and good health. Your loved one deserves excellent care!