

Community Supports

Designed For Community Agency and Nursing Facility Staff to Help Discharge Medicaid Nursing Facility Residents with Mental Health Diagnoses

Extensive Knowledge of Available Community Services

Community agency and nursing facility staff who help Medicaid residents with mental health diagnoses discharge to community settings need to have extensive knowledge of available community services. It is especially important for them to be aware of housing options, services, and providers that accept Medicaid clients. Recommended discharge training topics include an understanding of mental health diagnoses & behaviors, familiarity with community services and resources, and knowledge about policy regulations.

Discharge planning works more effectively when professionals understand community service programs, resources, and procedures. Using specific community support staff in discharge planning while educating residents and their families helps make the transition smoother. Furthermore, provide easy-to-use listings of community resources and their contact information to residents and their families.

Commonly used community service providers include: Area Agency on Aging (AAAs), community mental health centers (CMHCs), Social & Rehabilitative Services (SRS), home health agencies, home care agencies, hospitals, health departments, private health practitioners, transportation services, senior centers, Meals on Wheels, religious organizations, and charitable organizations.

"It's real important to be able to know what your community resources are and to be able to advocate for the residents to get them set up I just think the more we know about the community and ... the different programs and how they work, the better we're going to be [able] to help the patient"

– Social Worker

About This Brief

- This brief is designed to help discharge older persons who use Medicaid and have mental health diagnoses from the nursing facility.
- Staff members of nursing facilities who have helped persons with diagnoses of anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia successfully discharge to the community suggested and use these helpful discharge strategies.

"We [are] so good with the community. We can push [services] through pretty quick with them because they know us so well. ... We have a real good, strong relationship with most of the community workers that are involved with discharging, funding for the elderly and Medicaid patients."

– Social Service Director/Social Service Designee

Networking with Nursing Facility and Community Professionals

Networking and relationship-building among nursing facility and community agency staff are essential to identifying and implementing community supports for Medicaid residents who discharge to the community. Ideas for activities include:

- Attend luncheons, workshops, and seminars to learn about resources.
- Use listservs and the Internet to share ideas.
- Communicate by phone and e-mail with professionals, particularly at AAAs and CMHCs, to acquire information and maintain good working relationships.
- Plan events in which community providers make presentations about their agencies' services to nursing staff and residents.

Health, Safety, and Psychosocial Well-Being

Observing overall well-being, managing medication, securing in-home assistance, and participating in recreational activities are important for ensuring the health, safety, and psychosocial well-being of persons who discharge.

Consistent monitoring. AAA and CMHC case managers should get to know individuals who are discharging well enough to identify changes in physical and mental health. Their assessments would help in monitoring, identifying, and reporting suspected abuse and exploitation by formal or informal caregivers.

Medication management. It is important to identify community service providers who are authorized to help manage medications. Technological aids may also help manage medicine regimens (e.g. electronic pillboxes can alert someone if the medication is not retrieved).

Basic needs. In-home personal care assistance can be especially important for ensuring that basic needs, such as hygiene, meals, housekeeping, and transportation, are met.

Recreation and leisure. Being able to engage in recreational and leisurely pursuits is important, as these activities can decrease isolation and improve emotional health. Finding transportation for these activities is an important consideration.

Although relying on community supports is important for ensuring the overall health and well-being of all individuals living in the community, these supports are especially important for those without reliable informal supports.

Home Modification and Medical Equipment

It is important to identify and have in place the proper home modifications, medical equipment, and technology *before* residents discharge to private homes. Relying on a base of knowledge about companies and agencies that can provide this equipment helps make getting such equipment financially feasible for residents with Medicaid. Making home visits or arranging for the AAA to make a home visit is a helpful, preventative strategy for identifying needs and helping to ensure a successful discharge. Technology is often used for monitoring and can help reduce anxiety associated with no longer receiving 24 hour care. Informing individuals and their families about Lifeline services is a good starting point. Using innovative technological tools (e.g. web cams, sensors) can help to ensure successful discharge.

"I think the most important thing is, especially if they're returning home ... they're going to have quite a bit of support and a little bit of someone overseeing their medical care or seeing if they're taking their medications [or that] they're getting some proper nutrition." – Social Worker

Continuity of Care Across Settings

Ensuring continuity of care across nursing facility and community settings demonstrates that care needs have been properly identified. This can ease the anxiety related to making transitions. Practitioners that provide services to both nursing facilities and community populations are ideal. Including community service providers in discharge planning and initiating community services prior to discharge are desirable steps. Support groups and activities that involve both nursing facility residents and community dwellers make discharge an easier process. Additionally, follow up calls to individuals who discharge are helpful.



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