

Small Details Pave the Way for Big Things

“It’s attention to detail that makes the difference between average and stunning.”

— Francis Atterbury

It’s been an interesting and challenging 2021 and we can anticipate a similar year ahead as we deal with so many unknowns. What we do know is that we should always be prepared to deal with the unexpected changes that have become so commonplace since the beginning of the pandemic. As this year draws to a close and we are at the threshold of the new year, most of us will likely approach 2022 with trepidation, as well as cautious optimism. On the positive side, we’ve learned much throughout the past two years. Despite the many challenges, the lessons we’ve learned will carry us into the future with greater confidence in meeting the ever-changing needs of residents in assisted living, as well as those of the staff that provide the loving care that is the hallmark of the industry.

What makes this industry unique, in large part, is the constant striving for improvement in care and identifying best practices in providing that care. The state has recently updated their regulations – the document that guides the provision of care in the industry; however, remaining consistent is the requirement for an effective, ongoing quality improvement and assurance program. Under 651 CMR 12:04:10, assisted living residences are required to establish a Quality Assurance (QA)/Quality Improvement (QI) program “...to evaluate its operations and services to continuously improve services and operations, and to assure Resident health, safety, and welfare.”

Some time ago, Mass-ALA developed the Assisted Living Quality Improvement Tool: A Tool to Assist with Regulatory Compliance and Quality Improvement. This “Tool” has been an effective document in addressing operational issues in assisted living residences and aiding in the achievement and maintenance of high operating standards. It was intended, at its inception, to provide a format to assist ALRs in improving operations and monitoring compliance with regulations set forth by the state. As we planned our educational efforts and events for the coming year, we decided to begin 2022 with a strong effort to update “the Tool” to assist in identifying operational areas that may require further exploration, improvement, or recognition for excellence. Several modifications have been made over the years as the document was designed to be adaptive and flexible.

As a springboard for further education and instruction, “the Tool” will serve as the basis for a new educational series we plan to offer in the coming year. In a format similar to our ever-popular Boot Camp, we will develop the QA/QI Training Series, which we plan to offer in three modules in 2022 and in four modules per year in subsequent years. The series is currently under development and will take a deep dive into the details of many issues, beginning with initial screenings and assessments, going into departmental requirements related to QA/QI, staffing/staffing levels, training requirements, plant maintenance, all facets of operational concerns, reporting requirements, safety, risk management, and much more. Where Boot Camp leaves off in providing an extensive overview of important operational information, the Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Training Program will pick up and provide the details in a systematic approach that will be relevant, easy to follow, and immediately applicable to the operation of an assisted living residence.

At Mass-ALA, we consider it a privilege to support and partner with you in providing the best care possible for your residents. I'm excited about the educational events we have planned, with robust content that will educate assisted living staff at all levels. As we enter into the final days of this calendar year, reflecting on the past twelve months while we prepare for the coming year, I invite you to reach out with any suggestions you might have on topics you'd like to see offered that will meet the needs of assisted living residents and staff. Please feel free to contact me with your ideas on educational events and topics at lcashman@mass-ala.org.

I extend my best wishes to all for a happy holiday season and a new year filled with encouragement, hope, good health, and joy.

Warmest regards,

Laurie Cashman