

The Interdisciplinary Team



Novel Approaches to Team Education and Training

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Providing continuing education for employees is a challenge that must consider the needs and schedules of full-time, part-time, and per-diem employees who engage in an array of clinical duties and have differing educational levels. In the assisted living (AL) arena, not only are we challenged to meet state and federal requirements for continuing education, but we're also challenged to ensure that our employees know and understand the information they learn so they continue to provide the best care for the residents. Meeting the requirements seems easy. Document, record, and keep files for the surveyors. But how can you provide the needed education for every single staff member and also make it useful and memorable?

Senior Services of East Alabama Medical Center (EAMC) has tried several methods—each of them out of the ordinary and each successful in its own right. The Senior Services division of EAMC comprises Azalea Place, Magnolia Place, Camellia Place, and Oak Park. These 4 facilities provide retirement living, AL, specialty care AL (dementia care), and skilled nursing options to 320 residents with 220 employees.

Learning Gets a Lift from Fat Tuesday

To fulfill state requirements for annual continuing education, Senior Services began holding mandatory annual in-service programs. But to make them interesting and more memorable for employees, the administrative staff created special themes. For the first few years, the theme was Mardi Gras (chosen because the in-service was scheduled in late February). Team leaders decorated the building accordingly and strung beads around the necks of employees. One year they celebrated with a King cake. The in-service was held from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm, and employees could come any time during those hours. For the Mardi Gras in-service, many stations were set up, each dedicated to a required topic, such as abuse/neglect, nutrition/hydration, resident rights, infection control, and mental health information. When employees entered the Mardi Gras learning area, they signed a roster sheet and received a checklist for the in-service. Instructors signed the checklist at each station as evidence of the employee's completion of training.

At some stations learners viewed skits in which employee actors incorrectly handled patient care situations. At other stations handouts were provided as take-aways for later reference. Employees completed all of the stations in about 45 minutes. After employees visited every station and completed their checklist, they were given snacks and

refreshments as they left. The checklists were filed in each employee's competency notebook and the sign-in sheets were kept in each facility's education records.

As is done with all their in-service programs, the EAMC Senior Services staff is notified months in advance of the date and times for the annual in-service. Employees who are unable to attend must be excused by their manager. A make-up date is always offered to those who cannot attend so that every employee receives the required education.

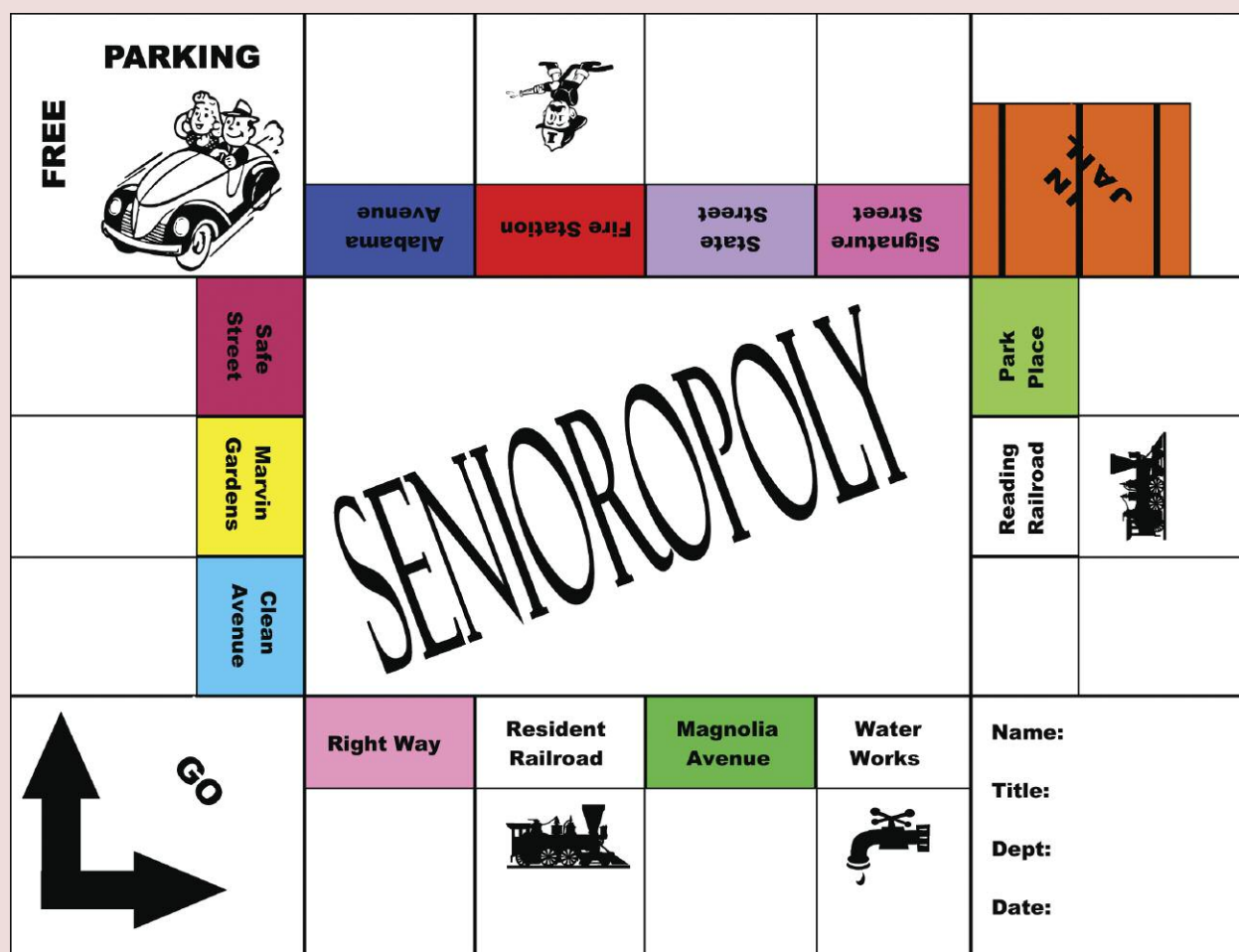
Walking in Residents' Shoes

The Mardi Gras program worked so well that Senior Services continued the theme for several years. But in 2006, administrators decided a new theme was needed—what they called “In Their Shoes.” The premise behind this theme was to put employees in the shoes of the residents. The building was decorated as an Italian restaurant that was appropriately named, “Caleghero Ristorante” which is Italian for “shoe restaurant.” The maitre d' welcomed those who entered the restaurant and presented each employee with a menu. The menu listed the tables that had to be visited and the topics that would be covered at each.

In addition to a menu, employees were instructed to select a piece of paper from a bowl. On the paper was listed a typical resident “limitation” that the employee would deal with throughout the in-service. For example, one limitation was lack of use of the right arm as a consequence of having suffered a stroke. The employee's arm was tied to his side with an ACE bandage. Another limitation was the inability to walk; this employee spent the day navigating the in-service program in a wheelchair. Other employees were assigned hearing problems and attended the program wearing cotton balls in their ears.

At each table, employees watched a skit after which they were asked questions about the actions or nonactions of the actors. The actors in the skits were team leaders of the facilities and were both humorous and educational. In the skit for resident safety, one of the leaders played the part of an elderly resident who fell, and the other team leader acted the part of an employee who tried to help her, but did all the wrong things such as scolding the resident and trying to pull her up improperly. Handouts were provided for employees at each table. Each handout was shaped like a shoe with a hole in the top. At the last booth, employees tied them all together—literally and figuratively. A piece of yarn was threaded through all the handouts and tied

Figure 1.
Senioropoly game board



together to become a booklet. While making the booklet, employees were prompted to discuss their experiences of attending the in-service program with their assigned limitations, discussing how the limitation made them feel. When all of the tables had been visited, the employees turned in their “menus” and were given a “to-go” box filled with snacks and refreshments. This in-service took about 60 minutes for each employee to complete. “In Their Shoes” was very successful and received many positive responses from employees. The set up and decorating took some time, but the costs were minimal because materials were already on hand.

Enter Monopoly a la Senior Services

In 2007 Senior Services changed the theme once more to “Senioropoly.” Senioropoly is modeled after the game “Monopoly.” On entry, each employee was given a game

board (Figure 1). On the back of the game board each property was named with a list of objectives for that topic. After the in-service, the completed game boards were placed into the employees’ competency files.

The game board properties were set up in several different rooms that pertained to the various topics. For example, the Water Works property covered nutrition/hydration issues. Some of the properties were topics that pertained to specific roles: Marvin Gardens covered skin care issues for all direct caregivers and Reading Railroad covered medication safety for all nurses. Each property had a different way of providing the information. At State Street, employees completed a word search puzzle, and at Right Way employees were read a situational story and asked to identify what resident rights were violated in the story. At the Fire Station, employees reviewed the fire safety policies and

Table 1.
Senioropoly property objectives

1. Magnolia Avenue

- Educate about identifying signs and symptoms of dementia.
- Provide information about the special needs of the elderly, mentally ill, and mentally retarded residents.
- Overview care for cognitively impaired residents.
- Provide information about promoting resident independence.

2. Water Works

- Review nutrition and hydration needs of the resident with dementia, including feeding techniques.
- Educate about nutritional needs of elderly residents.

3. Reading Railroad

- Provide overview of medication safety.

4. Park Place

- Review identifying and reporting of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

5. Signature Street

- Review and sign off on all applicable policy and procedure manuals.

6. State Street

- Provide overview of advanced directives.
- Review ways of protecting resident confidentiality.
- Review HIPAA guidelines.
- Review resident code status (eg, DNR, Full Code).

7. Fire Station

- Review resident fire and environmental safety.
- Demonstrate proper use of fire extinguishers (P.A.S.S.).
- Provide overview of facility fire and evacuation plans (R.A.C.E.).

- Review safety and emergency procedures including Disaster Preparedness.

8. Alabama Avenue

- Review state rules and laws for Assisted Living, Specialty Care Assisted Living, and Nursing Home.
- Review The Joint Commission guidelines and practices.
- Review Quality Assurance rounds and Performance Improvement activities.

9. Safe Street

- Review fall prevention strategies and guidelines.
- Review safety needs of elderly residents.
- Review basic first aid.
- Review identifying residents who are fall risks, elopement risks, and smoking risks (SAF-Tree program).
- Review elopement policy.

10. Marvin Gardens

- Provide information on appropriate skin care for elderly residents.

11. Clean Avenue

- Review infection control practices and guidelines.

12. Right Way

- Review respecting and protecting residents' rights.

13. Resident Railroad

- Educate about Resident Satisfaction.
- Review Senior Services' goals for Resident Satisfaction.

14. Free Parking

- Provide information about Senior Services' new education program.

My signature indicates that I have been in-serviced on the above topics:

were able to use an actual fire extinguisher.

Chance cards were placed at random properties for the employees to draw if they wanted to. Some of the Chance cards sent them to Jail, but some cards won them a prize or got them more money at the end of the game. After employees had completed each property, the "property owner" would sign off on the employee's game board. When all of the properties had been completed, the employees turned in their game board at the Bank. There, they received play money for completing the game and any extra money or prizes they had won with a Chance card. The employees then used the "money" at the Community Store to buy popcorn, chips, or cookies and a drink. If the employee was sent to Jail by drawing a Chance card, the jailor asked them a series of questions, which they were required to answer correctly to be released. The questions pertained to the information that was being covered by the various properties.

Senioropoly took about 60 minutes for each employee to complete. This creative in-service program turned out to be a fun way to provide needed education and review for all employees of Senior Services. Materials needed were minimal and the cost was reasonable considering the number of employees who were being in-serviced.

Using fun themes to meet training and education requirements of regulatory agencies has proven to be a successful approach to promote learning. It's also an efficient way to educate many people about numerous topics in a short amount of time and with minimal costs. Senior Services of EAMC continues to provide such annual in-services, drawing from a previous theme or creating a new one.

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