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Sep 03 2021

Independent Regulatory
Review Commission

August 29,2021

To Whom it may concern,

I recently learned about the 4.1 staffing regulation and have several concerns about it. My mother has been in skilled nursing for 5 years. The last 3 years she has been at Quality Life Services, Sugar Creek in Worthington, PA.

As much as I would love to have my mother at home, she has advanced dementia and requires assist of 2 for transfers and completely dependent for all activities of daily living. Prior to Covid 19 my father and I visited daily. In January, I was approved for compassionate care visits that allow me see her daily to feed her one meal. This has given me the opportunity to spend precious time with my mother, but to also observe the care provided to her. Mom receives excellent care with the staff they currently have. It takes the teamwork of all the staff to provide this care.

She has difficulty eating. Dietary is a crucial part of her care. Each one of the staff in this department impacts mom. It amazes me how concerned each of them are about her. She is currently on a puree diet. They strive to make it as appealing as possible. They check with me almost daily to see if mom is eating and what items she likes and dislikes. They make sure that she has adequate fluids on her tray. They are always willing to provide additional food items if she will not eat what is served. As a family member, it is very comforting to know that they are so invested in mom's care.

The speech therapist monitors her to be sure that she is safe on her current diet and provides direction on the best way to feed mom as her ability to eat changes as the disease progresses. Mom is not able to transfer or position herself into a wheelchair. Since she is confined to her bed or wheelchair it is important that she is positioned correctly to control pain and prevent skin breakdown. The physical therapist and occupational therapist provides guidance on seating and positioning and safe transfers. They also evaluate on a regular basis to see if therapy is appropriate for a period of time.

The activities director and staff are very good with mom. While she cannot participate in the activities there are other services that they provide that essential. Such as, they make sure that she is scheduled for her haircuts, that her nails are taken care of and other personal care. Her nails are extremely hard and sharp. If they do not take care of them, she can easily cut herself since her skin is so thin or unintentionally hurt a staff member when they are transferring or showering her. It is obvious how important the service they provide are to the other residents that are able to participate in the activities. They are excited to have something to do to pass the time and give them something to look forward to. It gives them something to talk to each other about. It is evident that plays a large roll in their mental health. There is a social worker available to discuss any concerns. Thankfully we have not have had a need to utilize her services often, but have observed many of the residents in her office and she is out and about on the units. She played a large roll in a resident that I got to know that that needed a lot of support service at discharge that would have been lost without her assistance.

The staff at the front desk plays an important role in the care of the patients. They monitor who goes in and out of the building, taking your temperature and asking covid related questions to keep the residents safe. They assist the residents that shop at the store that is available to staff, residents, and

visitors. They assist residents that wish to order food to be delivered. To many of the residents this is a treat that they look forward to that lifts their spirits. They do so much more than this that keeps the process flowing within the building but too numerous to mention.

The housekeeping and laundry staff play a vital role. They are all busy keeping the facility clean and reducing the chance of infection. They ensure that mom has clean clothes every day and take special care of the clothing that she has. Since we buy mom adaptive clothing that is costly, we appreciate knowing that the items will make it back to her. Most of the staff from the department know the residents by name and make them feel special by taking a minute to chat with them while they are cleaning the area.

Maintenance is crucial. They keep the grounds inside and outside safe. In addition, they can be seen working on wheelchairs, beds and other equipment. Mom is very sensitive to sound so appreciate that when an alarm goes off that they address the issue and turn off the alarms before mom has a complete meltdown.

The roles of the physicians, PA, nursing staff and CNAs are obvious. What you cannot take for granted is how they do what they do every day. Despite working long hours and keeping up with the changing guidelines due to Covid, these healthcare heroes do an amazing job. It is comforting to know that many of the staff care for my mom like she family. Mom has been well cared for since day one at Sugar Creek. They know her likes and dislikes. They are attentive to her physical needs. Many are compassionate and meet her emotional needs. I really can't imagine her being anywhere else.

The administrative staff are also involved in mom's care. They have their own responsibilities but it is not unusual to see them assisting with patient care. I have seen them feeding residents, helping deliver food trays, assisting CNA or doing whatever needs to be done. They are true examples of teamwork.

It's clear the entire staff is essential to the care my mom receives. She receives direct care from staff, more than just nursing care, that is not counted in the state's current or proposed minimum staffing requirement. The work of these caregivers should not be discredited. They are essential to the care of my mother, and the state should account for them.

I am writing this letter because without Sugar Creek, mom would not receive the care that she needs. My concern is that the new regulations will negatively impact them and other nursing home facilities that are necessary to take care of our loved ones. It is a challenge for most businesses to find quality workers and healthcare is no exception. The combination of the lack of workers to hire and the additional cost to meet the new guidelines are very concerning. I am willing to provide any feedback that you would be willing to consider regarding this issue. I can be reached at 724-525-0424.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lori Turberville