

A Glossary of Senior Living Terms

Advanced Directives

A written statement of an individual's preferences and directions regarding health care. Advanced directives protect a person's rights even if he or she becomes mentally or physically unable to choose or communicate his or her wishes. Examples include Living Wills and Medical and Durable Powers of Attorney.

Assessment

An assessment is a process where a resident's care needs are determined based upon a formal structured evaluation of the resident's physical and psychological condition and ability to perform activities of daily living. Assessments are often completed using information gathered from medical records, discussions with the patient and family members, and direct observation.

Activities of Daily Living (ADL)

Activities of Daily Living (ADL) are the day-to-day fundamental activities we do to sustain ourselves. The Basic ADL's which are crucial to daily functioning include mobility, eating and drinking, bathing and grooming, toileting and dressing. Instrumental ADL's, which are slightly more complex, include shopping for necessities, meal preparation, home maintenance, money and medication management, and communicating.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)

CMS is an element of the Department of Health and Human Services, which finances and administers the Medicare and Medicaid programs. Among other responsibilities, CMS establishes standards for the operation of nursing facilities that receive funds under the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC)

A unique senior community with varying levels of care, often encompassing Independent Living, Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing services on a single campus. As an older adult's health and care needs change, they may transition from one level of care to another, allowing them to "age in place".

Dementia

The loss of intellectual functions (thinking, remembering, reasoning) of sufficient severity to interfere with a person's daily functioning. Rather than a single disease or condition, dementia is actually a variety of symptoms that may accompany certain diseases or conditions, including memory loss and impaired cognition. Symptoms may also include changes in personality, mood and behavior.

Durable Power of Attorney

A legal document in which a competent person gives another person the power to make decisions for him or her if unable to make those decisions for themselves. This document can include guidelines for the person to follow in making decisions on behalf of the incompetent person and can relate to business, financial or healthcare decisions.

Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care

A legal document that lets you give another person the power to make health care decisions for you should you become unable to make or communicate decisions.

HIPPA

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires that all covered entities (most nursing facilities meet the definition of covered entity) provide a notice to patients detailing the ways in which the covered entity will use or disclose the patient's protected healthcare information (PHI).

Hospice

Hospice care is provided to improve the quality of life of the dying person and family. The program provides supportive services to terminally ill patients in the form of physical, social, and spiritual care that treat the person and symptoms, rather than the disease itself.

Living Will

A written document stating, in advance, an individual's wishes concerning the use of life-sustaining measures in the event of terminal illness or injury, should the individual no longer be competent. Also known as an Advance Directive.

Long-Term Care (LTC)

The broad spectrum of medical and support services provided to persons who have lost some or all their capacity to function without assistance, due to illness or injury.

Medicare

Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people who are 65 and older, certain younger people with disabilities, or people with end-stage renal disease. There are different parts of Medicare to cover specific services including: Part A (Hospital Insurance), Part B (Medical Insurance) and Part D (Prescription Drug Coverage).

Medicaid

Medicaid is a joint federal and state program that provides assistance with medical costs for people with limited income and resources, and may offer benefits not normally covered by Medicare. Medicaid never pays first for services covered by Medicare.

Occupational Therapy

A form of rehabilitative care. Occupational therapy (OT) helps residents relearn their ability to perform daily tasks focusing on fine and gross motor skills. This may be accomplished through day-to-day activities such as eating with utensils, dressing, or turning a doorknob.

Ombudsman

Ombudsmen work to resolve complaints and issues on behalf of individuals residing in long-term care settings. They help to educate residents on their rights and advocate on their behalf. An ombudsman can help resolve the problem in most cases; however, complaints involving serious abuse or neglect are referred to the appropriate agency.

Palliative Care

Any form of medical care or treatment that concentrates on reducing the severity of disease symptoms, rather than striving to halt, delay, or reverse progression of the disease itself or to provide a cure. The goal is to prevent and relieve suffering and to improve quality of life for people undergoing treatment and facing serious, complex, and/or terminal illnesses.

Private Pay Patients

Patients who pay for their own care or whose care is paid for by their family or another private third party, such as an insurance company. The term is used to distinguish patients from those whose care is paid for by government programs (Medicaid, Medicare, and Veterans Administration).

Physical Therapy

A form of rehabilitative care. Physical therapy helps restore a resident's function and strength and improves movement and mobility. This may be accomplished through a variety of exercises, stretches or physical activities.

Pre-Admission Screening

An assessment of a person's functional, social, medical, and nursing needs, to determine if it is appropriate for the person to be admitted to a nursing facility.

Protected Healthcare Information (PHI)

PHI is defined as individually identifiable health information that relates to the past, present, or future physical or mental health of, or the provision of healthcare to, a patient or resident.

Rehabilitation

Therapeutic care for individuals requiring intensive physical, occupational, or speech therapy, provided to restore them to a former capacity. Overall, rehabilitative services aim to improve functioning, quality of life and well-being.

Resident Care Plan

A written plan of care for nursing facility residents developed by an interdisciplinary team with specific measurable objectives and time tables for service to be provided to meet a resident's medical, nursing, mental, and psychosocial needs.

Resident Council

Resident Councils are run by and for the residents of the facility. A Resident Council routinely meets to answer resident questions, organize events, and discuss concerns or complaints. Facility staff may assist with the operations of the Resident Council to help resolve issues.

Respite Care

Scheduled short-term facility care provided on a temporary basis to an individual who needs some care but who is normally cared for in the community. The goal of scheduled short-term care is to provide relief for the caregivers.

Skilled Nursing Care

Level of care that includes services that can only be performed safely and correctly by a licensed nurse, either a registered nurse (RN) or a licensed practical nurse (LPN).

Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF)

Generally speaking, a skilled nursing facility is a clinical provider of 24-hour licensed nursing. A SNF is primarily engaged in providing services for residents who require medical or nursing care and/or therapy services for the rehabilitation of injured, disabled, or sick persons.

Survey

A detailed, unannounced inspection of each licensed facility conducted at least once a year.

Speech Therapy

A form of rehabilitative care. Speech Therapy helps individuals improve communication conditions such as aphasia, swallowing difficulties, and voice disorders. Speech therapy may include cognitive communication activities, breathing exercises, or exercise to strengthen oral muscles.

Transfer

To move a resident from one place to another – from the bed to a wheelchair, or from residential living to skilled care.