

Case 1: Help is on the Way! Or Maybe Not

1. What are the major sources of the communication problem at Ridge View?

- ◆ Communication between staff and management was too informal. Staff members were confused about their roles in the organization and this fueled communication difficulties.
- ◆ Roles of all staff involved were not clearly defined. As we discussed in class, it is extremely important to establish current job descriptions (written) and review them with employees at least once per year.
- ◆ Supervision of Assisted Living staff was weak. Both Ms. Griffin and Ms. Roberts should have gone out and about more often, so they would have been aware of emerging issues within the department. Ms. Roberts' "hands-off" leadership style may have led the assisted living staff to assume that they were free to interpret the existing policies as they chose, because they were not being actively supervised. Also, floor supervisors should have been actively mentoring and monitoring their subordinates' work performance.

2. Give possible reasons for the confusion in understanding the procedures.

- ◆ Ms. Roberts' hands-off leadership style made it seem that she did not understand or have an interest in the procedures and issues of the department. Ms. Griffin hired Ms. Roberts for the Resident Services Manager position without a document that described or specified the work details. "Assisting in day-to-day operations" is a vague term, requiring further explanation. It was especially essential for Ms. Roberts to have a detailed job description because she had never managed a clinical unit before. Ms. Roberts did not know what was expected of her as a manager. Departmental policies and procedures were not periodically reviewed or updated. Additionally, there seemed to be no apparent new employee orientation program and an ongoing employee development program. As discussed in class, it is critical to establish and review performance criteria and expectations with employees.

3. What suggestions do you have for formalizing the communications on the unit?

- ◆ Communication and feedback mechanisms must be established to make sure that all employees understand and follow the procedures. Establishing routine staff meetings to discuss emerging issues could help to strengthen communication. Use of correspondence (bulletins, memos, newsletters, emails, Internet homepages, etc.) will help to improve awareness and understanding of policies and procedures. They could also give important information on whom to contact to resolve any conflicts. Feedback from the staff can be solicited through suggestion boxes, open-door policies and emails. Placing a list of phone numbers at the front desk and then walking away does not do anything to improve communications!

4. What steps could be taken to improve the training of the personal care assistants?

- ◆ New staff should go through an orientation session. Informational seminars should also be given throughout the year to review and update policies and procedures. One good way of presenting the information would be to involve the Assisted Living Staff in the presentation and discussion of policies and procedures. It is essential that Ms. Roberts and Ms. Griffin attend these training sessions and demonstrate support for them.