



“Another Set of Eyes” for F-Tag Avoidance: Feedback from the Floor of Country Oaks Care Center

Following a recent acquisition, Country Oaks Care Center’s Certified Infection Preventionist Edwin Alvarez knows a change of ownership survey is imminent.

For Edwin and his staff, who manage 59 beds, the audit was the perfect opportunity for a dry run without the added stress of having the state at his front door. “Our nurses and other staff responded very well to the questions and observations,” explained Edwin. “Instead of it being an anxiety-filled experience, we were able to have a third party come in that many of the staff are familiar with and receive constructive feedback on what they can do better.”



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– Edwin Alvarez

The most valuable component of the audit for Edwin was simply having an extra set of eyes in areas where they may lack focused oversight. “There are things we know we should be doing better but often lack the time for,” Edwin shared. “Our audit revealed some issues that we need to work on and, as a result, we’ve already scheduled in-services on the topics.”

It wasn’t just the content of the feedback from the Nurse Consultant that was important, but also how quickly it was delivered. “Getting the detailed report of findings in a timely manner was incredibly helpful because we were able to immediately know what to focus on in preparation for survey to avoid a deficiency.”

One oversight that could have cost the facility was that, during its recent office move, the QAPI binder wasn’t available. The team has since located it but, according to Edwin, just that one observation “probably saved us an F-Tag.”

While Edwin’s proud of the way his facility operates, he recognizes that there’s always room for improvement. “There’s no process that can’t be refined, especially when there are so many people involved and you want consistency across employees working different shifts. Any time we can get extra help to fine-tune what we’re doing, it is welcome.”

Because of his experience with the audit program, Edwin would highly recommend it to others, especially given CMS’s new requirement in 2021 that facilities have a dedicated Infection Preventionist, regardless of size. “This program provides a powerful training tool to aid these new IPs who have come on board in the last year or so.”

In light of today’s staffing challenges, Edwin says any service it can take advantage of to strengthen the facility’s compliance is invaluable. “With this type of insight, we can focus on exactly what we need to do to educate the team, improve our practices – and continue to elevate our performance.”



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