DON Responsibilities & Leadership

What did I sign up for?

Overview

- Understand the role and responsibilities of a Director of Nursing
- Understand the leadership role
- Understand the difference between leadership and management skills
- Understand the management roles

JOHN MAXWELL

"The single biggest way to impact an organization is to focus on leadership development. There is almost no limit to the potential of an organization that recruits good people, raises them up as leaders and continually develops them."

Purpose of Director of Nursing

- **Primary-Ensure residents receive safe, high-quality, and person-centered care** while maintaining **compliance with regulations** and **supporting the nursing team.**

- Clinical leader of the nursing department

DON Responsibilities

- Leadership and Management
- Regulatory Compliance and Survey Readiness
- Clinical Oversight and Quality Assurance
- Resident Care and Safety
- Education and Staff Development
- Collaboration and Communication
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Emergency Preparedness

Key Qualities of an Effective DON

- Strong clinical judgment and attention to detail
- Excellent leadership and communication skills
- Ability to balance compliance, compassion, and operational efficiency
- Strategic thinker focused on outcomes, quality measures, and resident satisfaction
- Resilient and adaptable in a fast-paced, high-stakes environment

What is Delegation?

- The process of transferring responsibility for a task while retaining accountability
- Involves assigning appropriate duties to qualified staff
- Must align with the “Five Rights of Delegation”:
  1. Right Task
  2. Right Circumstance
  3. Right Person
  4. Right Direction/Communication
  5. Right Supervision/Evaluation

Why Delegation Matters

- Promotes teamwork and professional growth
- Improves efficiency and quality of care
- Builds staff confidence and trust
- Reduces burnout for leadership and staff

DON Delegation Responsibilities

- Know scope of practice laws (RN, LPN, CNA)
- Match staff competency with resident needs
- Communicate clearly defined expectations
- Monitor performance and provide feedback
- Maintain accountability for outcomes

Delegation Barriers

Common Barriers

- Fear of loss of control
- Lack of trust in staff skills
- Poor communication
- Time constraints
- Inadequate follow-up

Overcoming Barriers

- Build staff competency through training
- Foster open communication and psychological safety
- Start with small delegations
- Provide recognition and support
- Use structured tools like checklists or delegation logs

Leadership

In Delegation

- Delegate authority, not just tasks
- Empower others to make decisions within their role
- Lead by example: show trust, transparency, and accountability
- Evaluate delegation outcomes and adjust as needed

The Art of Delegation

- It’s about balance — trust + accountability
- Effective delegation = more time for leadership, strategy, and quality improvement
- When done right, it strengthens your team and enhances resident care

Questions

Let's talk

- Why do you work in LTC?
- How long have you worked in LTC?
- Why are you still here?
- What is your motivator?
- What is your "why"?

https://youtu.be/NQN4mtTagL0

The Best Leaders Know This

Who is your team?

- What are the critical building blocks of a great team?
- Have you recognized your mentor/coach?
- How do you recognize the team you serve with?
- How do you recognize the players?

Hint: You cannot be a "friend"…your role is a coach which is more than a friend!

What is Leadership?

- Inspires and motivates others toward a shared vision.
- Focuses on people, culture, and long-term growth.
- Encourages innovation, engagement, and empowerment.
- Leads by example through integrity and compassion.
- Builds trust and fosters teamwork.

What is Management?

- • Plans, organizes, and coordinates daily operations.
- • Focuses on systems, policies, and efficiency.
- • Ensures compliance with regulations and procedures.
- • Allocates resources and monitors performance.
- • Maintains stability and accountability.

Leadership vs. Management

- Leadership: Vision-driven, people-oriented, future-focused.
- Management: Task-driven, process-oriented, present-focused.
- Leaders inspire change; managers maintain structure.
- Effective DONs balance both roles to ensure care quality and team stability.

Leadership in Long-Term Care

- Sets the tone for person-centered care and a positive culture.
- Empowers nurses and CNAs to advocate for residents.
- Promotes open communication and recognition.
- Leads quality improvement and innovation initiatives.
- Models empathy, professionalism, and resilience.

Management in Long-Term Care

- Oversees scheduling, staffing, and documentation.
- Ensures compliance with CMS and state regulations.
- Manages budgets, supplies, and resources.
- Tracks quality measures and survey readiness.
- Supports the DON’s leadership through structure and accountability.

Integrating Leadership and Management

- Great DONs are both leaders and managers.
- Leadership creates the vision; management makes it happen.
- Balance inspiration with structure and consistency.
- Build a culture where care teams thrive and residents flourish.

Key Takeaways

- Leadership and management are complementary skills.
- Strong leadership enhances staff morale and resident outcomes.
- Effective management ensures quality, safety, and compliance.
- The best DONs integrate both to drive excellence in long-term care.

Closing Thoughts

- “Leadership is doing the right things; management is doing things right.” – Peter Drucker

- As a Director of Nursing, your success depends on your ability to inspire, organize, and deliver exceptional care.

-Marin Luther King Jr.-
“A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus.”

Resources:

- http://stem.vcsu.edu/shared/MSP-grant-documents/2016-2017/Day-10-June-9/Ashley_&_Ashley_Docs/Inventories_and_Rubrics/Personality%20Inventory.pdf
- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5607712/
- https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4082967/
- https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/leadership-vs-management

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