

Advancing Behavioral Health Equity in Nursing Facilities-Promoting Healthy Pathways for All

Behavioral health equity is the right of all individuals (regardless of race, age, ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, citizenship, native language, or geographical location) to access high quality and affordable mental health and substance use services and support.

Nursing facility staff can play a major role in effectively advancing behavioral health equity to ensure that every resident can be as mentally healthy as possible.

Provide ongoing behavioral health equity education and training related to mental health and substance use. Include unique challenges faced by different races, ethnicities and cultural beliefs.

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Recruit staff at all levels, that reflect resident sociodemographic characteristics including ethnicity, race, culture, and language. A diverse team enhances cultural sensitivity and understanding.

During intake, implement universal screening for social determinants of health, mental illness, and substance use. Symptoms may present differently across races and ethnicities. Early identification is key for prompt referral and treatment.

Coordinate access to quality diverse behavioral health services. Build collaborations with community behavioral health experts to provide on-site, off-site, or telehealth assessments, counseling, treatment, prevention, and recovery services.

Engage culturally appropriate behavioral health experts who speak the same language as the resident or provide interpretative services. This ensures residents can fully participate in the treatment process.

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Strategies for Advancing

Behavioral Health Equity

Use these actionable strategies to positively impact residents. Each strategy stands alone, implement the ones that best align with your facility's goals.

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Involve residents in decision-making. Give residents a voice in mental health or substance use treatment options that work best for them.

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Ensure mental health and substance use service information and resources are communicated in a manner that is understood by the resident. This enables residents to make informed decisions.

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Implement a facility-wide stigma reduction campaign to eliminate misconceptions about mental illness and substance use disorders, thus creating a space space for wellness.

9

Foster a sense of community, belonging, and inclusiveness. Create opportunities for residents to share their unique experiences, culture, history and mental wellness activities.

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Perform a facility assessment to identify, monitor, and address any barriers to providing behavioral health services to residents. Take proactive steps to immediately correct any identified gaps.



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