



# Pittsburgh Regional Healthcare Initiative

Reprinted from *PRHI Executive Summary*, October 2005

Naida Grunden, editor

[Charles M. Morris Nursing and Rehabilitation Center](#)

## Perfecting Patient Care: It's not just about the closets



**A real veteran.** Systematic work shows respect for everyone, including workers like Nora Morant, a 56-year veteran of the Linen Department at JAA's long-term care facility.

At the Charles M. Morris Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Squirrel Hill, part of the Jewish Association on Aging (JAA), Nora Morant knows the value of a good system for delivering linens. After all, she has worked there for 56 years—since 1949.

“When you're working with teamwork and you have an organized system, it's fine. It's beautiful,” says Morant. “We used to have a system, so that idea is nothing new to me. But we need to get even better with

teamwork.”

Morant, along with over 150 fellow JAA staff members, has completed a four-hour introductory course in the principles of Perfecting Patient Care (PPC). The training, conducted by PRHI personnel through a grant from the Jewish Healthcare Foundation, is being offered over the next several months to every frontline worker at Charles Morris.

President and CEO Dave Gritzer, with firm backing from JAA's Board of Directors, has declared that residents' needs are first and foremost, and that safety and quality will be built into the way work is done. Top priority is the elimination of falls and infections among residents.

“It's the way we're doing business,” says Gritzer of Perfecting Patient Care. “Our number one concern is making sure all residents at Charles Morris and the adjoining JAA facilities have the best of care. Our other big concern is making sure our staff members have what they need, when they need it, so they can be successful and satisfied with the care they provide every day.”

Long-term health care consumes 30% of America's health care dollar. Studies show that healthcare workers spend up to half of their time looking for supplies, such as linens. That's time they cannot spend with residents doing the work for which they were trained. The opportunity exists at Charles Morris—as it does at thousands of healthcare organizations across the country—to streamline work and return time to the staff and residents.

“Giving the best care to residents means having reliable systems that make work easier and more efficient,” says Monica McWilson, RN, Team Leader for Perfecting Patient Care at Charles Morris.

### **Cold meals: finding the root cause**

Eliminating falls and infections begins at the point of care. When staff reported residents' complaints of cold meals, McWilson went to the units and, along with other frontline workers, watched what happened at meal times. They noted that often, residents had not been groomed or readied for the meal when it arrived—usually hot and on time. Why? One problem was traced to the linen supply on the floor—too many of one thing, not enough of another. If staff had to run from place to place to find appropriate linens, time was lost and residents could not be ready for meal time.

“We asked the staff on the floor, “What are the obstacles? Why can't we have all residents ready for their meals on time?” It was the staff who identified linens as a good place to start,” said McWilson.

### **Looking at the closet**

Starting closest to the point of care, McWilson and crew on the Beechwood unit observed the linen closet there. They watched how the closet was stocked, how staff found and retrieved linens, and whether it was easy to tell if there were too few of an item or enough to meet residents' needs 100% of the time.



**Getting training to those on the front line.** Over 150 JAA employees from across all departments have received a four-hour introductory course in the principles of Perfecting Patient Care. Team Leader Monica McWilson, R.N., leads an exercise using Legos to help participants understand how small changes can improve work flow and improve everyone's productivity. Staff members have returned to the workplace with new enthusiasm about their role in improving their work.

The linens were clean and stacked, but not in a way that made the needed item easy to find. Occasionally, access to the linen shelves was blocked with a cart full of bed pads, which had to be removed before access could be gained to other linens. Linen carts, which workers use to transport linens from room to room during scheduled bed changes, also occasionally blocked access.

Relying on the principle of the "visual work place," McWilson and several frontline workers labeled the shelves to keep linens in a standardized order. Blankets will always be on the bottom shelf, for example, pads in the center, washcloths on the right-top. Blue tape lines above the shelves show the top limit for stacking according to state requirements. Likewise, cards posted on the floors prevent anything from being stored there. The portable linen carts for staff are on the side in a taped-off area, no longer inhibiting access.

### Early results

So far, not only can the healthcare workers find linens more easily on Beechwood, but the visual closet has made other problems apparent, too. Currently, blankets and washcloths are in short supply; pads are plentiful. Staff are examining the causes and solutions to those problems.

Over time, McWilson believes, the closets will "talk" to them, helping them quickly recognize when they have too much or too

**Weinberg Village's** Squirrel Hill campus offers a number of services as part of the region's comprehensive Jewish Association on Aging (JAA). Weinberg Village, as all JAA services, are intended for the elderly people of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

The Squirrel Hill Campus includes:

- > **Charles M. Morris Nursing and Rehabilitation Center:** 157 beds
- > **Assisted Living Residence:** 44 beds
- > **Ladies Hospital Aid Society (LHAS) Arbor Unit** (for patients with dementia): 16 beds
- > **Irving Spolan Center** for Adult Day Care : appx 40 people
- > **Sivitz Jewish Hospice:** open to people all over the county, including those at other nursing homes.
- > Largest **kosher kitchen** in Allegheny County includes service for Mollie's Meals, kosher, home-delivered meals for those over 60.



**Ask them.** JHF/PRHI onsite coach, Fran Sheedy Bost, leads the frontline worker training at JAA. “If you ask the workers, they will tell you,” says Sheedy Bost. “They will tell you they could deliver better care if they had more time with each resident. They will tell you the current system is filled with waste or error. But here’s the real key: direct care staff know how to fix the problems. It’s up to us to ask them.”

little of an item. Stabilizing the system will make work easier across all departments: resupply will become almost automatic; linen suppliers will know exactly what is needed; workers will never run out of linens; and residents will always have what they need.

Leaders of other units are taking a look at Beechwood’s improvement, which is still very new. But promising signs include more on-time grooming for residents and decreasing complaints about cold food. The effects on falls and infections are also being monitored.

“But beyond this one experiment,” says McWilson, “we hope that creating reliable, organized linen storage can be the first step in transforming the way we do our work. Not only can this benefit all of our residents, but all of our co-workers too.”

Or as Nora Morant says, “We’re getting back to teamwork. Everything’s come full circle.”



*Above:* It wasn’t always easy to tell how much was needed, what was or wasn’t being used.  
*Right:* linen cart blocked access to a cart that overflows with pads.



*Visual work space:* taped lines show stack height limit  
*Labeled shelves:* show where items go, makes it easy to see what’s running low. Nothing’s in the way.  
*Nothing on the floor:* signs taped to the floor say it all.

