

# Nursing Home Services

## Case Study

### Dining Program Nourishes the Soul at Chelsea Jewish Nursing Home

Over 20 years ago, the staff, administrators and residents at Chelsea Jewish Nursing Home (CJNH), a Kosher long-term care facility, embarked on a mission to improve the facility's dining program. According to Betsy Mullen, Executive Director, and Janet Geiger, RN, Director of Nursing, nobody was happy with simply passing food trays to residents. It was a "one size fits all" approach that often meant limited food choices that were served at incorrect temperatures. As a result, the kitchen received many special requests from residents and staff, which was frustrating and increased workflow. Back then, the facility didn't realize that what it was working on was, in fact, "culture change" because there was no terminology for it.

After meeting with staff to gain input about a proposed change to the dining program, administrators engaged Newbury College in the redesign. The idea was to involve professionals from the hospitality industry in discussions about table setting, food offerings and other details that would transition the program from institutional to more home-like.

One challenge that presented itself was how to get the food to arrive at the units at the appropriate temperature; after some brainstorming a cart system was developed to transport food and maintain proper temperatures. The end result was a dining program that offered at least three selections each during dinner and supper meals and where dishes were cleared from tables after each course. The new approach created a homey ambiance throughout the facility, with appetizing aromas drifting through the air, and tables that were set with tablecloths, linens and china. Although some residents still required the use of trays because of dietary restrictions, most of the residents were able to participate in new program.

CJNH also opened a French-style café in 1999, complete with a hand-painted mural, to give residents a place to visit with their families. It's open seven days a week and offers light breakfast and lunch fare like muffins, fruit, yogurt, sandwiches and popcorn.


The facility constantly re-evaluates its dining program by seeking input from residents and staff at regularly scheduled intervals and on an ad hoc basis. In addition, the executive chef visits residents during meals to gauge their satisfaction. Administrators feel that because of the improved atmosphere and choices offered, the facility has not experienced a problem with weight loss, a common issue in nursing homes.

Going forward, CJNH plans to offer residents even more flexibility by creating food preparation spaces in each dining room where simple offerings can be assembled (e.g., pancakes, omelets, sandwiches). This will allow residents more control over their wake-up and meal times and it is also believed that staggered morning routines will positively impact workflow. Preliminary feedback from residents and families has been positive. CJNH will monitor this new initiative closely to see whether staffing patterns need to be adjusted.

Both Mullen and Geiger stress that consistent staffing is integral when undertaking a change like this, and they applaud the flexibility, commitment and support provided by staff. Through the facility's involvement with Masspro, they've listened to and learned from peers, maintaining momentum even during the challenging times.

#### About Chelsea Jewish Nursing Home

Chelsea Jewish Nursing Home is a 123-bed residence that has been providing care since 1919. Services include skilled nursing, residential care, rehabilitation, Alzheimer's, dementia and end-of-life care.



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