



# *Inservice* Training Guide

Strategies for Effective  
Long-Term Care  
Staff Education

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# **Chapter One**

## **Traditional inservices**

# Traditional inservices

## Traditional inservices

The most common method of inservice delivery is the formal, preplanned inservice. Staff is made aware of the inservice topic, date, time, and location, all of which the staff development nurse determines and prepares well in advance. Inservice topics often incorporate basic care skills, new research developments, diagnoses, quality needs, changes, problems in the facility, or facility policies and procedures. They may include skin care protocols, pharmaceutical updates, unusual diagnoses or surgical procedures, wound care management, and fall prevention. In addition to creating these themselves, staff development nurses can also purchase entire inservices from health care education companies. These purchased inservices can be developed to include topic areas specific to the facility.

An inservice includes the objectives to be covered, opening activities, the body of information, an activity or game, a post-test to assess if objectives were met, and a program evaluation for future inservice developments. If you create your own inservice, you will need to identify the problem, the goal, and the teaching approaches. Like a care plan, an inservice must be tailored to the facility, staff, and residents.

The traditional inservice format is the primary method of delivering mandatory inservices. Check with your facility policies, state regulations, and federal OSHA, JCAHO, and any other accreditation requirements for yearly mandatory inservices. Topics may include abuse prevention, patients' rights, HIPAA, fire safety, infection control, cultural diversity, age specific care, and pain management. Develop a yearly and a monthly inservice calendar to ensure that all required inservices are scheduled within the year. In addition,

make sure that staff are aware of which inservices are mandatory—and try to reserve the term “mandatory” for required inservices.

## **Encouraging attendance**

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Prior to the inservice, walk around the facility and personally ask staff members if they plan to attend. It is important to tell them you look forward to seeing them there, and to let them know a little about the inservice to get them excited about it. If they are unable to attend the inservice when it’s being held, ask if they can come to the next one or if they’d like you to give them some handouts or a video to watch later. It is important for staff to know that you are committed to getting them the information when it is convenient for them. Do not be pushy, but assure staff that you will be there when they are ready. To grab attention, wear a hat that relates to your inservice topic as you pass out personal invitations to the upcoming inservice. Use bright posters to advertise in the break room or near the time clock.

## **Inservice openings**

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At the inservice opening, when staff first begin to arrive, gather staff and begin the inservice. Greet staff as they arrive to the classroom and thank them for attending. At this time, you can set up, pass out handouts and other materials, have staff sign an attendance sheet, and offer refreshments. It is important for staff to know that inservices will start on time. Staff development nurses should never be late to a scheduled inservice, or staff may feel devalued or that they do not need to be on time either.

At the beginning of the inservice, state the event’s objectives. Depending on the inservice topic and the staff in attendance, begin the inservice by either formally stating a few objectives of the inservice or informally asking staff to share their objectives for the inservice. This introduction serves as an opportunity to ask staff if they have ideas or questions about the inservice topic. If staff list questions at the beginning of an inservice, you will be able to quickly determine how to make the inservice more relevant to them.

Consider asking one staff member to record the questions on a piece of paper or on a board to be reviewed during or at the end of the inservice. As another option, questions may be held until the end of the inservice, or staff can ask their questions as they arise during the inservice. Some staff may know the answers to the questions; the staff development nurse chooses whether to answer questions himself or herself or to allow other staff to do so, thereby recognizing staff expertise.

## **Timing**

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Set a time limit for the inservice ahead of time so that staff do not become restless wondering when it will end. Time limits should always be adhered to, as inservices are typically worked into busy clinical schedules. Keep the inservice as short as possible, and staff will appreciate that you have valued their time. Ideally, a lecture should last 20-40 minutes, with an additional ten minutes allotted for a game, question period, or post-test.

## **Inservice teaching methods**

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The inservice may involve a lecture, posters, videos, handouts, demonstrations, games, or discussions. For most inservices, the essential information should be delivered in the form of a lecture, which allows it to be clearly outlined and thoroughly explained. Your presentation can also be multisensory, featuring overheads, and music. Food is another great way to incorporate senses into your presentation. The most effective method will depend on the topic, the staff in attendance, and the need for return demonstrations. For instance if your group is small, you may want to sit with participants and encourage open discussion of the topic being inserviced, encouraging them to ask questions. For a larger group, you may need to ask staff to hold their questions until the end of the presentation.

## **Questions as a teaching method**

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Traditional lectures can cause your staff to feel disengaged from the topic, so try alternatives. Your staff will appreciate your creativity, boosting inservice attendance and staff attention during the inservice. A good option is to ask questions at critical points during your lecture. This allows staff to pull from their own experiences and will help ensure maximum participation, especially



if the questions are open ended or have multiple answers. For example, ask staff what could be used as alternatives to restraints or how to prevent combative behaviors. Start with a few example answers to give your audience a sense of what you are looking for.

You can also encourage participation by offering a “participation ticket” each time someone participates in the discussion. At the end of the inservice, have staff write their names on the backs of their tickets, and then collect all tickets to use in a prize drawing. Prizes can be distributed creatively, perhaps wrapped in gift wrap or chosen by the winner, and can include free promotional material.

## **Remembering your audience**

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The language used in an inservice needs to be appropriate to the staff in attendance. Keep in mind the different educational levels of staff when lecturing. Do not talk down to the staff in attendance; they came to learn from you, not to be embarrassed or made uncomfortable. Some nonclinical staff members may not know what an immune system is, for example, but may feel uncomfortable asking you to define it. You do not want staff to stop listening to you because the terms you use are unfamiliar, so keep your language as simple and direct as possible and encourage your audience to ask questions.

## **Storytelling**

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In a long-term care setting, learning from the experiences of others is invaluable. Every staff member has a unique set of real-life professional experiences that work as powerful teaching tools. For example, if a staff member has seen a pressure ulcer, you may want him or her to describe to the group its colors and odors, and how they felt when they saw it. Also consider sharing stories of your own: Using a personal experience can make lecture information come alive for the staff. You could tell a story about caring for a patient with dementia, discussing the individualized interventions you used to care for the patient’s needs, to prevent a fall, or to handle a behavior problem. In addition, stories about disasters (such as fires) in care facilities show your staff the importance of being prepared in an emergency. Use drama, humor, and excitement when you tell stories of your experiences.

## Video presentations

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Use videos if it is appropriate to do so. Be sure to view them for length and content before you show them, and avoid showing overly complicated or lengthy videos—staff will not pay attention to these. You may want to show a portion of one in conjunction with your inservice, or you could show a scene and ask staff what they think about it. Also consider your audience with regard to content. For example, it may not be appropriate to show housekeeper staff a video of medical doctors discussing treatment of tuberculosis. While nurses may find the video informative, housekeepers may not find any value in the topic unless the staff development nurse can inservice them appropriately. If you do use a video during your presentation, evaluate whether or not staff- learned from the clip with a post test, game, or discussion of the video topic.

An alternative to purchasing a video is to make your own. A facility-specific video is a great tool for new staff orientations, and while it is important to keep essential sections serious, you can incorporate humor as much as possible. For instance, make a fire safety video in your facility and ask staff to participate in it. Alert each department that you will be filming, and prepare them with fire safety questions specific to their department. Then, dress up like a fire fighter to discuss your facility's fire prevention and emergency plans on camera, and tour the facility with a partner video taping you. As you walk by the hall or a break room, ask staff short questions about what they would do if they saw a fire or heard the fire alarm. Have another partner behind the camera hold up a cue card with the answer to your question on it—this will relieve any anxiety the staff member may have about participating in your video. It may initially be difficult to convince staff to participate, but they will all want to see the video when it premieres to see who was in it.

## Demonstrations

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Some staff may feel uneasy about performing a certain task or new procedure. Ease the process for them by demonstrating the procedure yourself and then asking them to repeat it. As well as effectively teaching the procedure, these “return” demonstrations can help evaluate staff competency in a skill.

For example, an inservice on transferring residents may be more effective if a proper transfer is demonstrated by experienced staff members. After the demonstration, audience members can practice transfer techniques on one another. It is a great learning experience for staff members to be transferred in a mechanical lift because they get to experience how a resident feels when being lifted. In this situation, offering a formal inservice with demonstrations and return demonstrations would be more appropriate than watching a video.

Offering an inservice in which all attendees practice the procedure will help ensure that the quality of care is maintained. For example, in order to evaluate transfer competency of certified nursing assistants (CNAs), you can hold a “transfer fair.” Set up transfer stations in a large room and include a bed, wheelchair, or lounge chair at each. Decorate the rooms, using balloons and brightly colored signs to number them. CNAs will travel from one station to the next and transfer a senior staff member, who will assess their competency. These senior staff members can be nursing supervisors or therapy staff. You can also ask for a non-nursing department member, such as a social worker, to fill in as the “resident,” so that nursing supervisors can focus on the CNA’s performance.

Be sure to advertise your “transfer fair” so that staff will have time to plan on attending. An inservice like this requires significant preparation time and coordination with other staff members, so start planning early. Let the supervisory staff know what will be expected of them if their help is required. To further accommodate staff and to have as many attend as possible, hold this inservice for at least two hours and over a change of shift time. Encourage your nursing units to send down CNAs in a rotation, so that when one returns to the unit, another is sent to the inservice.

## Games

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Games are a great way to engage staff and encourage teamwork. Games should be creative, easily explained, and appropriate to the topic. Buy inexpensive, unique prizes or treats, either for the winner or for everyone. If there are staff members from different departments in the inservice, it is important to have questions that are appropriate to all educational levels so no one feels left out.

Consider adapting popular television game shows or board games because staff tend to already know the rules. You may even want to dress up like a game show host to further engage staff. For example, the television show “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire” offers a great opportunity to ask coworkers if they are unsure of the answer. As in the show, they can “ask a friend” by asking one person in the room, “ask the group” for the answer they need, or “call a friend” in the building. Alert department heads that you are going to be playing this game and that they maybe called and asked a question.

If you are playing a game in which the final question is supposed to be the hardest one of the entire game, be prepared to have a question that is appropriate. For example, if you are playing “Jeopardy” and the staff members who are going to answer the final question include a house-keeper, a nursing assistant, and a nurse, use a question that they all have a chance to answer correctly. One easy way you can do this is by using true/false or multiple choices questions. Staff will feel more comfortable and less intimidated participating in the game if they know that they will not be made to feel that they do not have the answers.

Keep in mind that some people do not like games and should not be pressured to participate. Allow them to be score keepers or question readers. By asking, hearing, and answering questions out loud, everyone will learn, and staff will appreciate your creativity.

## **PowerPoint presentations**

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Using *PowerPoint* presentations can be an effective method of organizing your inservices. *PowerPoint* allows you to create handouts for staff to follow and an outline for you to speak from. In addition, *PowerPoint*-generated handouts can be made into informational packets for staff who were not able to attend your inservice. Staff will appreciate your approach to a quality presentation.

## **Evaluating learning**

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Always evaluate whether staff learned the inservice objectives, using return demonstrations, case studies, game-like questions, or formal or informal post-tests. Formal post tests can be developed based on the inservice objectives, distributed to staff, and collected when complete. Informal

post tests, when appropriate, can act as another evaluative method. These post tests allow you to review every question and answer with the staff, providing further time to discuss the inservice objectives and an opportunity for staff to share answers, discuss points, and write down correct answers. Any question type can be used for informal and formal post tests: true/false, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank are popular choices.

Also consider creating a sample case study and asking staff a series of questions related to the case. If the inservice is about fall prevention and alternatives to restraints, write a case study about a patient who frequently falls. Your post test questions could then address types of individualized interventions that could be used for this patient to prevent falls.

## **Program evaluation**

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Program evaluations provide staff with the opportunity to evaluate inservices. Through discussion or written response, allow staff to provide you with constructive criticism or suggestions on how to better help them learn in the future. Design an evaluation form with specific questions regarding the inservice content with open-ended questions that allow for staff to give you some personal feedback.

For example, you could ask questions regarding whether they liked the inservice, what they would have added to the inservice, what they liked best about the inservice, what they liked least about the inservice, and whether the learning environment was comfortable. Since open-ended questions like these require staff to use time answering them, you may not want to use this type of evaluation for every inservice. Consider using shorter evaluation forms that ask simple yes-or-no questions or questions with rating scales. Either way, evaluations will provide you with valuable information on how you are doing.

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