

Considerations for Flexible Dining Services

Use these questions to gather information and identify needs or areas of improvement for the dining services in your facility. The answers should be used in evaluating new styles of meal service.

Impact on Resident Care

- What are the needs and desires that have been expressed by residents?
- What types of comments and feedback on meal services are received from family members?
- When observing current dining room services, what type of impression is received as noted by the observer?
- If a plate waste study were conducted would the results be less than favorable?
- Have residents asked for more or different dining services?
- What types of services are marketed in the community in other senior living settings?

Impact on Labor Utilization

- Is the labor budget fixed or flexible?
- What is the rate of staff turnover?
- What is morale like with the staff and does the staff exhibit the ability to be open minded about new programs and services?
- Is there a cooperative working relationship with nursing and dietary services?
- Does dietary staff interact with the residents in meal services? How do they interact?
- What method of cooking is used, convenience or scratch or combination of both?
- Assess the current level of expertise with the staff and if staff members are cross-trained to do other jobs, i.e., are cooks able to be creative with recipes?
- Is labor centralized in the kitchen or decentralized to the dining rooms for dietary staff?

Impact on Raw Food Budget

- Is the raw food budget fixed or flexible?
- Is the goal to keep within current budget guidelines or promote a decrease or allow an increase in spending?
- Are dollars spent on supplements and snacks accounted for?
- Have leftovers and waste ever been calculated as a percentage of the raw food budget?
- Will staff meals be provided?
- Will the facility promote or allow purchases from "fast food" or a request upon demand system?
- Will special events be included in the raw food budget?
- Will the new program be a part of the marketing plan?

Equipment Considerations

- Is adequate equipment available in the kitchen to prepare multiple items at a meal?
- Is equipment available in the dining locations for salad and hot food areas, as well as desserts and beverages?
- Is there a communication system between the dining room and the kitchen?
- How extensive is the distance between the dining room and the kitchen?