

Nursing Home Initiative

Case Study: Mr. B

The Scenario

Mr. B. is a 49-year-old man who was admitted to a nursing facility in 2001 following a change in mental status, significant decline in health status, and his mother's inability to continue to provide safe, appropriate care. Mr. B. is diagnosed with an orthopedic impairment called ataxia, learning disability and anxiety. He has an unsteady gait and falls frequently.

When the Nursing Home Initiative (NHI) case manager first met Mr. B., he was using a manual wheelchair, and although he had an interest in walking, he had anxiety, a fear of falling and decreased independent decision making skills. Although Mr. B's interest in walking was addressed at team meetings, the nursing facility's follow-through was limited to providing him with a consistent and structured walking program, which encouraged him to be as independent as possible.

The Solution

The case manager arranged for a "specialized service" provider to work with Mr. B. individually to address this issue. The service provider worked with Mr. B. on exercises to improve his strength and balance. After consulting with the nursing facility physical therapist, the provider and case management staff designed a plan for assisted, supervised ambulation and strengthening exercises to be completed at the nursing facility.

As Mr. B. made progress, case management and provider staff modified the plan to include strategies to decrease his anxiety concerning his perceived limitations (fear of falling) and increase his confidence. Staff also advocated for the nursing facility staff to provide supervision to allow Mr. B to walk on the unit, when provider staff was not present. Soon, Mr. B. expressed interest in stair climbing so that he would be able to climb the steps to visit his mother's home. When this was presented to nursing facility staff, they expressed safety concerns stating they would be scared to death of the individual climbing stairs.

Provider and case management staff continued to advocate for Mr. B. to be assessed by the nursing facility physical therapist to consider stair climbing. An assessment occurred, and the plan was developed. Mr. B. continued to make consistent progress. The nursing facility eventually revoked the order for Mr. B's wheelchair.

The Outcome

Today, Mr. B. no longer uses a wheelchair and walks with a walker throughout the nursing facility and on community outings. He also uses elevators, and he is able to climb the stairs at his mother's home.

About NHI

Commonwealth Medicine's Nursing Home Initiative helps public agencies provide coordinated supports to individuals residing in nursing facilities, to maintain their functioning abilities, increase their independence and improve their quality of life.

Using a person-centered approach, Nursing Home Initiative case managers determine the 'specialized services' from which each individual will benefit most—whether day habilitation, employment opportunities, independent living skills or continuing education. We then work with multiple provider agencies, nursing facilities, guardians and families to arrange the supports needed, provide ongoing oversight and continue to advocate on the individual's behalf.

Our highly skilled, hands-on case managers bring an expertise in working with people with developmental disabilities, including training in clinical social work, gerontology, rehabilitation counseling and occupational therapy. We draw upon this varied skill set, as well as the clinical resources of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, to develop creative, personalized service plans for each individual in the program.

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