Orientation Training
Basic Housekeeping Skills
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What Makes a Home
Every home is as different as the people that live in them. Some people place a high value on cleanliness and the particular way their home looks, feels or even smells. Others don’t. As a caregiver placed with a client, it is important that we meet the client’s preference and not our own. While you may not feel the need to sweep the kitchen everyday, your client may feel that is an important piece of keeping their home tidy. On the other hand, you may feel it is necessary that you clean the toilet daily and your client may feel otherwise. Whenever possible, and as long as basic hygiene and safety levels are met, we are to accommodate the client’s requests and preferences.

The way we keep our home can also be defined by how we were raised. Some families did chores and worked together, while others had assigned tasks. Some tasks were assigned by age ranges and others by the sex of the individual doing the task. For example, yard work was for the boys and kitchen work was for the girls. The level of completion of that task is also particular to that individual or family. For some, a quick wipe of the counter with the dish rag would be appropriate, but for others, use of special cleaning supplies will be required.

Need For Safety
While this training course identifies basic housekeeping skills such as cleaning and laundry, it cannot cover every item you may be asked to do for your client. We encourage every caregiver to contact the office if you feel you have been asked to do something outside of the scope of service that PCHS related to you in orientation. Remember, your safety and the safety of our clients is very important. Do not attempt to use any piece of equipment that you are unfamiliar with. It is always best to ask questions first. Always remember to keep two feet on the ground at all times. Do not stand on chairs or unsteady objects to reach areas above your head. Remember, follow standard precautions and always wear gloves.

A Job Done Right
There is fine line between just doing a job or task and doing a job or task right. Throughout this training you will be reminded to do the job right. This can take many forms and look differently depending upon the job or task at hand. For example, if you are asked to clean the kitchen and you have emptied the dishwasher, cleaned out the refrigerator, swept the kitchen floor and even wiped down all surfaces so that they are germ free and spotless, but you do not take out the trash in the kitchen, the job was not done right. Another example could be that, even though you did the tasks that were assigned to you by leaving all the chemically soaked paper towels including spoiled and rotten food removed from the refrigerator and thrown in the trash, the room will look great, but smell terrible for the client.

A Room With A View
Just as you look at yourself in the mirror one last time before leaving the house in the morning for work, church or a social event, so you should never leave a room without taking one last look around before you leave. Make sure you put the cleaning supplies away, empty the trash, remove obstacles that may cause a fall and straighten anything out of place. Remember that as you leave your client’s home, they way you completed your projects not only says a lot about you and PCHS, but it is the place your client calls HOME.
Cleaning Glass and Mirrors
It is often thought that glass cleaner is all you need to thoroughly clean glass and mirrors, but the reality is that first using soapy water on glass and mirrors will help the glass cleaner do a better job and you will end up using less of the cleaning product (which is also better for budgets and the environment). Vinegar and water also does a nice job on glass and mirrors and when used with newspaper or lint free cloths often eliminates the streaks.

Using Wood and Furniture Polish
Like glass cleaner, furniture polish is not always meant to be used as a cleaner. A light soapy water bath can help remove stuck-on grime for surfaces that can tolerate it. However, if you use a soapy water bath, use as little water as possible and quickly dry the surface before applying polish. For delicate surfaces or those that will not tolerate a soapy water bath, polish may be used as a cleaner. Be sure to carefully read the labels before using any product you are unfamiliar with. The purpose of most polishes is not to clean, but to keep dust from magnetizing to surfaces. Surfaces can include wood, metal, electronics, plastics and many other types of materials.

Using All-Purpose Cleaners
Be cautious with all-purpose cleaners because, contrary to their labels they are not always safe for all surfaces and purposes. As with all chemicals and cleaners, make sure you read the labels thoroughly and when using for the first time, try it on the back or bottom of the surface when possible to avoid an unsightly mistake. Take caution not to mix all-purpose cleaners. Many products that carry the same name, often have different chemical compounds, some of which can be dangerous when mixed. Some people like to mix their own products, like ammonia and water. If your client prefers this, be sure to label all containers thoroughly with name and date.

Laundry
Washing: With most washing machines the generic instructions are as follows. First select the water temperature needed for the clothes or linens to be washed. Next, select the water level by picking the size of the load. Turn the machine on and as the water begins to fill, add the instructed amount of laundry detergent so that it can dispense in the water. Then add your wash once the soap has completely dispensed. If you are using fabric softener balls, make sure they are working correctly. Old fabric softener balls in need of replacement will often open at the wrong time in the washer cycle and can leave stains on clothes due to the premature or delayed release of the fabric softener.

Drying: The way you load your wash into the dryer can affect the way the items turn out. Once the washing cycle is complete, shake out each item of clothing, towels or linens to help untwist the fabric if twisting occurred. Taking this extra step will help prevent wrinkling and help fabric dry more efficiently. Whenever possible, take the fabric out of the dryer while the clothing, towels or linens are still warm to ensure as little wrinkling as possible. Do not allow the dryer to be in use while no one is home. Fire safety is very important and therefore, checking the lint trap is necessary between each load.

Ironing: Use a spray bottle with water to help smooth wrinkles. Empty water from iron after each use to prevent rusting. Read instructions carefully for temperature setting and always unplug the iron when not in use, even if you step away just to answer the door.
Vacuuming
Vacuuming is the most effective way to pick up the dust and small particles that collect on flooring and the surfaces of soft furniture, such as couches. Seen and unseen particles like pet dander often cause client’s to have allergy attacks and sinus problems. Always pick up large items, especially things that are metal like paperclips, coins and screws. Sucking them up through the vacuum can cause damage to the machine. The scheduling for vacuuming should depend on the amount of people, pets and outdoor/indoor traction that happens in your client’s home as well as their personal preference. With all equipment, read the manufactures instructions whenever possible or ask your client for operating instructions to ensure proper usage. Remember to empty the debris bag or containment unit as needed.

Mopping
There are some exciting new methods for mopping today. Gone are the days of the mop and bucket. While the new technology exists, nothing takes the place of using elbow grease. PCHS does allow for caregivers to wash floors on their hands. However, special circumstances can be arranged if the caregiver feels they are not physically able to do so. A client may not require a caregiver to do so against their will. Be sure to sweep and remove as much loose particles as possible before mopping. Whenever possible, hot soapy water is the best way to remove stuck on dirt and grime from floors. Be sure any chemical or cleaning solutions is appropriate for the floors before using. If it is the first time the client has used the product, use it in a corner or in a closet so not to cause damage in an obvious spot on the floor.

Washing Dishes
Using the Dishwasher: The dishwasher is the best bet for getting clean and sanitized dishes. The dishwasher allows the use of very hot water to aid in the sanitization of dishes, glasses and silverware. When using a dishwasher, do not overfill the washer. Dishes placed too close together do not allow the hot water and dish soap to reach all sides. Do not let dishes sit in the dishwahser for days unwashed. While we do not want to use excessive amounts of water or soap, leaving dirty dishes that may have germs which can cause illness is not recommended. Pots and pans however, are usually best washed by hand. Their size and depth make it difficult to get clean. Delicate items such as wine glasses or serving platters should also be washed by hand. Ask your client if you have questions about what should be washed by hand or in the dishwasher. To finish the job correctly, make sure all dishes that have been cleaned and dried are put away where they belong and the sink and counters are clean and dry.
Washing Dishes By Hand: If you do not have access to a dishwasher and have to wash dishes by hand, make sure to use as hot of water as tolerable and change out the dirty water often. Washing dishes in dirty soapy water is not acceptable. Water should be hot, soapy and clear. When the water is no longer hot, soapy or clear, new soapy water must be made. Washing dishes by hand right after use is much easier than leaving dishes for later and allowing food and liquids to stick or harden to the dishes and glasses. If dishes are left too long and food is difficult to remove, they may need to be soaked to allow for softening. Always make sure to rinse the dishes after washing them in hot water before drying to remove any soap or remaining residue. Whenever possible dishes should be allowed to air dry. However, do not leave dishes for your client to put away after you leave from your shift. Finally, make sure that all rags, sponges and brushes used for cleaning dishes are kept clean and free from germs and debris. Replace them as needed and when necessary wash them in the washing machine or in the dishwasher. Remember that moisture is the enemy and all rags, sponges and brushes and should be allowed to dry thoroughly in between uses.

Sanitize Basic Appliances
Be sure to check products before use on stainless steel. There are special cleaners for “glass top” stoves. Never use steel wool on any surface. There are many kids of kitchen disinfectant sprays on market that can help make clean up easy. Easy Off Oven Cleaner now comes in a “cold oven” spray which is easy to use. It can also be used for difficult dirt on the individual burners (gas stove) and catch rings underneath the burners (electric) that have been unplugged. Make sure to always cover foods when cooking in the microwave to cut down on clean up and unsanitary conditions. Use hot soapy water to wipe out shelves and drawers in the refrigerator and be sure to rinse with hot water. If you turn off the refrigerator to clean and/or defrost, be sure to set a timer so that you remember to turn it back on when you are finished. Most refrigerators are now “frost free” and do not need be routinely defrosted. However, if it is an old model that does require defrosting, be sure to watch and empty the drain pan located at the bottom of the refrigerator behind the “kick grill” (that will need to be removed). Use ice chests or coolers to store frozen food while you defrost the freeze or place the frozen items in the sink with heavy towel or ice over the food. Use pans of hot water in the freezer to speed the process of melting ice but never chip ice from the walls of the freezer.

Inspect and Remove Rotten or Expired Foods
Use your eyes and nose and, when in doubt, throw it out! Don’t use foods that are soft or mushy and are not normally that way. Be careful of produce that does not look or smell good. For odor, place an opened box of baking soda on shelf toward the back of refrigerator. Look for expiration labels on cans and other food products like meat and milk. Clients often do not want to throw out food due to the feeling of wasting food or “throwing money down the drain.” Remind them that throwing away a piece of chicken that is spoiled is cheaper than a trip to the Emergency Room, not to mention the potential illness and symptoms associated with consuming spoiled goods. Should your client not wish for you to throw something out which you deem a risk, be sure to call the office and notify them of the client’s wishes.
Organizing Everyday Kitchen Items
When at your Client’s home look to see if things are placed too high or too low for your Client to access. Brainstorm together to find other alternative locations to keep items. Clutter can be a fall risk, so talk with your Client about items they rarely use, maybe even encouraging them to donate them to a thrift shop or church. Doing so can also be a tax write-off. Remember that while they might not be using it, they may not want to throw it away either. Suggest that maybe someone else is in need and by donating they are giving others.

Disinfect Toilets, Tubs Showers and Sinks
Have a set of gloves just for bathroom cleaning only! In order to have cleaning supplies handy in the bathroom, use a bucket or caddy and store under the sink. Keep the same sponge/rag for toilets and have a separate one for sinks and the tub. Use a mixture of baking soda and vinegar on mold around tub and shower. It is non-toxic and biodegradable. You can also use a mixture of water and Clorox for mold. Put it in a spray bottle and make sure to mark it quickly so you do not forget the contents. Let the spray sit for 20 or so minutes, then rinse with hot water. This will have a strong smell so it would only be recommended in spaces that have a window to open or a fan for ventilation.

Trash and Recycling
Always use a trash can liner of some kind in the trash receptacle. If the Client will not buy trash can liners you may use grocery bags or line the bottom of the receptacle with newspaper. Spray the receptacle with disinfectant after emptying any trash in order to kill odor-producing molds and bacteria. Ask your Client about recycling and if your client is unaware of how to recycle, encourage your Client to contact the city or county for options. Recycling can be a great project and activity each week for some clients. If the city or county doesn’t pick up recycling, you can make a trip to a recycle location once a month. Help your Client stay organized by having a basket or location for newspaper or other recyclables for easy access.

Working Outside
Outdoor tasks can help create a better living environment and while PCHS does not provide lawn maintenance or care, we often help by watering plants and sweeping off patios when dust and leaves collect. Making sure patios and entry ways are clean of debris and cobwebs. This will also eliminate bugs and other outdoor creatures from making their home inside your client’s.

Caregiver Tip
Remember, even if the Client is a relative, it is still important to give them a voice and choice in the way they want their home to look and feel. Safety is important, but so is feeling that they belong.