

# Identity-Based Care

A Preliminary Training Proposal For



XXXX XXXXX  
Executive Director  
Pacifica Senior Living Chino Hills, CA

## I. The Need

**Pacifica Senior Living** takes pride in providing the best possible care for its residents—particularly in our *Legacies* memory care program.

However, excellence requires constant improvement. In that quest, we face a twofold challenge: *logistical* and *conceptual*.

### A. Logistical

Our approach to care and the training of caregivers varies from one facility to another. This is partly the result of having acquired facilities from other organizations, each of which has its own approach.

### B. Conceptual

In our large and diverse group of communities, there is no clear set of core training concepts that is universally applied. This makes it hard to ensure consistency. It also makes it difficult to measure the performance of staff and the quality of care.

## II. The Solution

Pacifica will benefit from an *integrated, uniform* training program which ensures the excellence of care that we promise and strive for.

The best foundation for this program is not a set of directives but a *philosophy*, which can be conveyed in clear, simple terms to all Pacifica caregivers. The subsequent practices and techniques will follow as a natural outgrowth of that philosophy.

This proposal describes the philosophy that I believe will best serve Pacifica's residents and raise our standard of care to the highest possible level. It further outlines the ways that philosophy can be implemented through specific practices. And it describes the training and education program that will instill the philosophy throughout Pacifica's communities.

### III. The Concept

*Identity-Based Care* is rooted in a simple concept: The person with dementia is still a *person*, unique and precious. The functions of memory and cognition may be impaired, but the core *identity* of the person remains intact.

Effective, compassionate care must begin with an affirmation of that identity. The dementia sufferer is not merely a set of problems to be solved, or a repository of symptoms. There's still a person in there!

### IV. The Philosophy

*How we view* our residents shapes the way we care for them. If we don't understand who they are, we can't relate to them with compassion. That requires (as Rosemary Dunne describes in her book *Dementia Care Programming: An Identity-Focused Approach*) an *attitude of discovery*.

Each person we serve has accrued a lifetime of experiences, wisdom, accomplishments, skills, relationships, interests, joys and sorrows. Their ability to share these treasures is blocked by their cognitive impairments—but the treasures are still there. By recognizing the unique identity of each resident, caregivers can draw out their hidden value, and create a rich, life-affirming environment for them.

### V. The Implementation

Training only has value as it is implemented at the person-to-person level. For hands-on caregivers, the immediate demands of physical care and crisis resolution can obscure the deeper needs of their subjects.

In his seminal work, *A Theory of Human Motivation*, psychologist Abraham Maslow describes a *hierarchy of needs* which all humans experience. It begins with the basic physical requirements of life, and progresses through our universal need for love and friendship. At the top end of the hierarchy are the more rarefied needs for *esteem* and *self-actualization*

In our efforts to provide effective care, we can easily stop at the more basic levels and ignore the needs for esteem and self-actualization. But these needs are still present—

even in persons with dementia. With proper training, caregivers can reach into these realms and truly enrich the lives of their residents.

*Identity-Based Care* training will inspire caregivers to regard their role as a high calling—not just a job. With a solid foundation in the core precepts of identity –based care, they will then receive specific, tangible tools they can use to enhance the experience of the people they serve.

## VI. The Training

*Identity-Based Care* will be conveyed through a systematic training program made available to staff at all Pacifica communities.

The training will begin at the regional-director level with *train-the-trainer* events. These will be live eight-hour seminars, accompanied by PowerPoint presentations and printed training manuals.

With the participation of the regional directors, the same training will then be conveyed to individual directors and department heads, who can then implement it with their staffs.

Along with the live seminars and PowerPoint presentations, caregivers will receive printed workbooks that allow them to fill in important information as they go through the presentations. This interactive approach will help to establish the precepts in their minds.

## VII. Background

For a number of reasons, I am uniquely positioned to author and present the training I have proposed here.

Senior care has been the passion of my life for 37 years. In my role as executive director at 11 different facilities, I have had a chance to observe what works and what doesn't.

Having seen both the bad and the good in senior care facilities, I have been gratified by the high level of integrity I've witnessed at Pacifica. My decision to present this proposal is motivated by a strong desire to see that high standard brought even higher.

I have also been inspired by my extensive personal reading on this subject. A number of excellent works have informed my views, but especially *Dementia Care Programming: An Identity-Focused Approach* by Rosemary Dunne. Many of the philosophical precepts I employ are elucidated in this book.

The program I've described here has already been implemented in a limited form in the Chino Hills community where I serve as executive director. The results have been promising indeed. In just six weeks, we have seen:

- Resident exit-seeking almost completely absent
- Marked decrease of fall incidents
- marked decrease of agitation
- Palpable decrease in employee stress
- Increase in employee understanding
- Employees less task-oriented, focused on meeting resident needs in real time
- Marked improvement in job satisfaction
- Decreased family concerns
- Fewer 911 calls
- Decreased use of psychotropic medications

## VIII. Conclusion

As executive director of Pacifica's Chino Hills community, I have had the opportunity to observe firsthand the excellence that distinguishes Pacifica Senior Living.

It is with sincere appreciation of those qualities that I offer this proposal. I believe the approach I advocate will enhance Pacifica's service to its residents and make our network a model for senior care facilities everywhere.

At the request of Pacifica corporate management, I can prepare a more thorough, formal proposal outlining costs and describing these elements in greater detail.

With Appreciation,

Cristi Steichen  
Executive Director  
Pacifica Senior Living Chino Hills