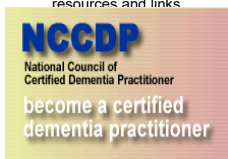


ABOUT SANDRA

Sandra Stimson has experience as a corporate consultant, Corporate Trainer and National Speaker. Her experience is in long term care, as Activity Director, Director of Alzheimer's Units and Assistant Administrator of a 550 bed long term care county home. She is Co-founder of Pet Express Pet Therapy Club, is a Life Replay Specialist. Sandra implements dementia units nationwide. Sandra has written several books, Volunteer Management Essentials for Long Term Care and Pet Express Pet Therapy Program. Sandra has been a facilitator for Alzheimer's support groups and is the Awards Chair for the NJ Association of Activity Professionals. Sandra is the Executive Director of **National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners**
<http://www.nccdp.org>.

Alternative Solutions in Long Term Care offers resources for health care professionals in many areas of dementia care, care plans, Snoezelen products, dementia activity calendars, adult day care calendars, sensory calendars, reminisce videos for dementia, activity books, and dates to remember, party supplies, resources and links



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Pathways to the Past

by Sandra Stimson ADC, CALA, CDP
 Executive Director, [Alternative Solutions in Long Term Care](#)



Trip Planning for Dementia

A facility recently took their residents from a dementia unit to New York City. The City is very crowded and they ended up with a resident wandering off." Luckily, 24 hours later law enforcement found the resident wandering the streets and unharmed.

"An assisted living facility took several dementia residents with one activity assistant and one bus driver to a crowded mall. They lost the resident for over an hour. The elopement was never reported."

"An activity assistant took 7 residents by herself to a large apple orchard. She had no form of communication. All residents were ambulatory and diagnosed with dementia and Alzheimer's. She opened the door and began letting the residents out of the van. They immediately scattered. She was unable to call for help. Luckily after an hour, she found all the residents. One resident had fallen in a hole but was unharmed.."

Residents diagnosed with dementia and/or live on a dementia unit may go on supervised outings; however, there needs to be some thought and planning given when taking residents on a trip.

Only take the number of residents that can be safely monitored. On all trips there should be an activity assistant, nursing assistant and a bus driver, or two activity assistants and a nursing assistant. A nursing assistant should accompany all residents as they are trained in areas of ADL's. Additionally, if you have only one activity assistant, and a resident has to go to the rest room, who will be left to monitor the residents? Administrators and Director's of Nursing must make it a policy to have appropriate supervision when residents diagnosed with dementia are on facility outings. The facility is leaving itself open for possible accidents, elopements, fines and law suits should anything happen. The best solution for these trips is one assistant (could be a volunteer or family member) to one resident.

All residents should have proper identification. One creative way is to have both the residents and the staff wear T shirts that have the name of the facility printed on the front and back. This is really important in the case of elopement and the need to know what the resident was wearing. It is a quick visual way to monitor and supervise the residents.

If there is an elopement, administration is to be notified immediately before the search begins. Don't wait! Time is not on your side. Residents can wander into traffic, fall and any of a number of serious injuries and accidents can occur.

The Activity Director should complete and document the in-service that deals with Trips and emergencies. The in-service should specifically state what to do in situations of elopement, illness, falls and accidents and the reporting procedures. For example, is the Executive Director to be notified first? When should you call 911?

The activity staff should be equipped with cell phones when on outings. The unit manager should be a part of the discussion of which residents are appropriate to attend facility outings. The receptionist, administrator, Director of Nursing, Unit Manager and the Activity Director should be provided with a trip form that states:

- Name of location
- Address and phone number
- Departure time and return time
- Resident names
- Staff names
- Cell phone number

Pick the location well. The Activity Director should visit the location prior to the trip to access the environment, crowds, bathroom facilities, parking lot and number of exits for the location. Also, call the destination to make sure they are prepared to receive you. Smaller venues are recommended such as;

- Small diners
- Small pet shops
- Small stores
- Small stores such as five and dime vs. a large shopping mall.
- Drive to a resident old neighborhood
- Small zoo

Plan your time well. Probably the best time to go on an outing is 10:00 A.M. and return by lunch time. A long trip is probably not recommended as they tire easily. There are times through out the year that you may want to take residents on trips where they do not leave the van such as viewing Christmas lights or observing fall foliage.



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If the resident exhibits extreme anxiety over leaving or returning, perhaps it is best that the resident not attend future trips. This should be clearly documented in the resident's chart. The staff should note the behavior and interventions used to calm the resident down.

Staff should be seated through out the van because a resident may attempt to get out of their seat. It is important that one staff member is seated in the back of the bus to observe for safety or illness issues.

On all trips, bring along snacks, orange juice and apple juice. There are times when the bus may be delayed due to accidents and traffic. You may also have a resident who is diabetic.

Always communicate for success. Let the residents know where you are going. When you get off the bus, let the residents know what they will be doing. When you with them return, tell the residents that you are now returning and the name of your facility. Keep your answers brief and to the point. There is a great book on communication called Creating Moments Of Joy on the www.activitytherapy.com web site. This could be used as part of your in-service and training.

Trips and outings are very beneficial to the dementia resident. Some of the benefits are; Relaxation

- Reminiscing about the location
- Fun
- Self Esteem Building
- Diversion

There are also many products on the market for tracking such as GPS systems. If you feel you may need additional support in the event of a possible elopement, you might investigate Project Lifesaver. Project Lifesaver has great success in locating missing residents in a matter of minutes.

You can avoid catastrophic reactions and situations if the Activity Director trains the staff, plans the venues, provides enough staff on outings and communicates with the other staff in the facility.
-END



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