Communication Tip: Utilizing a Butterfly Indicator

Utilizing a Butterfly Indicator is a method of communicating a resident's death to staff, volunteers, residents, and family members. Consider the following techniques in your home:

- Placing the butterfly on the door of a deceased resident can prepare staff and volunteers prior to entering the room.
- Putting a butterfly on the resident's chart can help nursing staff identify who has a palliative or end-of-life care plan.
- Palliative care team members can identify themselves by placing a butterfly indicator (i.e., pin) on their uniform.
- Encouraging palliative care team members to have a butterfly beside their name on the shift rotation boards allows for staff, residents, and families to easily identify who is on the palliative care resource team.
- Placing a butterfly at the place setting in the dining room of a resident who has died communicates that resident's death to other residents and families.

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Purpose
A butterfly indicator is a subtle way to alert staff prior to entering a resident’s room that a death has occurred. It is an immediate action that can provide notification to staff in the event of a death as not all departments can be informed at the time.

Process

Resident is pronounced dead by the Registered Nurse or physician

One of the resident’s caregivers (PSW, RPN, RN) will acquire the butterfly from the magnetic white board in the documentation room

The caregiver will then proceed to document information on the butterfly indicator data sheet (also located in documentation room)

The butterfly is placed on the top of the deceased residents door frame

Butterfly indicator is taken down after the body is removed from room

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