

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A

Abandonment – leaving a client unattended if the plan of care requires constant supervision.

Abduction – away from the center (midline) of the body.

Abrasion – a scraping or rubbing off of the skin.

Abuse – the infliction of physical, sexual, or emotional injury or harm.

Active range of motion exercises – movements carried out by the client.

Activities of daily living (ADL) – any activity that is performed in one's life on a daily basis.

Acute – developing rapidly with pronounced symptoms and lasting a short time; rapid onset, short term.

Adduction – toward the center (midline) of the body.

Admission – the process of beginning health care services.

Advance directive – a document that designates the client's wishes in the event that he is unable to speak for himself.

Advocate – a person who defends someone else.

Agitation - vocal or motor behaviors such as shouting, fidgeting, pacing, screaming, or wandering.

Agnosia – loss of the ability to recognize familiar objects.

Alzheimer's disease – a progressive impairment of memory, reasoning, and judgment that is related to cellular changes within the brain and that leads to loss of independence in activities of daily living.

Ambulation – to walk.

Ambulatory – able to walk.

Anterior – toward the front.

Anti-embolism stockings – elastic hosiery used to minimize the occurrence of edema and blood clots.

Anus – outlet of the rectum.

Anxiety – an uneasy feeling in response to a stressful situation.

Aphasia – language difficulty due to brain damage, which can affect listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills; loss of the ability to use or understand language.

Arteries – blood vessels that carry blood away from the heart.

Arthritis – inflammation of a joint.

Asepsis – the absence of germs.

Aseptic – free of microorganisms.

Aspiration – to draw fluid or object into the lung when breathing in.

Assault – threat or attempt to injure another in an unlawful manner.

Assessment – an appraisal of the whole person to establish a baseline and determine the client's potential and his need for help.

Atrophy – wasting away of muscle tissue leading to weakness.

B

Basic Human Needs – activities required by all people to successfully and satisfactorily live their lives.

Bacteria – single-celled organisms that can cause disease/illness.

Battery – unlawful application of force to the person of another.

Bipolar disorder – a major mental disorder characterized by manic and depressive episodes.

Bladder – a muscular sac that stores the urine in the body.

Blindness – inability to see.

Blood Pressure – the amount of force exerted against the walls of an artery by the blood.

Body mechanics – using correct techniques in performing certain functions in a manner that does not add undue strain to the body.

Body-substance precautions (standard precautions) – guidelines for preventing the spread of infection that includes handwashing and use of personal protective equipment such as gloves, gown, mask and goggles

Body temperature – the amount of heat in the body that is a balance between the amount of heat produced and the amount lost by the body.

Bowel and bladder program – a program that helps the client to regain control of bowel and bladder functioning to the extent that he is able.

Bowel movement – solid waste eliminated from the digestive tract.

Bowel obstruction – a blockage in the intestine.

Bronchi – two large branches of the trachea through which air moves in and out of the lungs.

C

Cannula – a plastic or metal tube.

Service plan – an individual plan of care for each client.

Cataract – clouding of the lens of the eye.

Catheter – a sterile tube inserted into the bladder to drain urine.

Cheyne-Stokes – a pattern of breathing in which respirations gradually increase in rate and depth and then become shallow and slow; breathing may stop for 10 to 20 seconds.

Chronic – continuing over a long period of time or recurring frequently; chronic conditions begin insidiously, and symptoms are not as noticeable as in acute conditions; long, drawn out, long term.

Circumcision – surgical removal of the end of the foreskin of the penis.

Client – person who receives healthcare services from an in-home provider.

Coccyx – the bone at the base of the spine (tailbone).

Cognitive – dealing with the thoughts and emotions.

Colostomy – an artificial opening made in the abdominal wall to allow the passage of feces through a stoma (opening).

Combativeness – physically aggressive behavior, hitting, kicking, scratching, biting.

Communication – the exchange of information accomplished by sending and receiving messages. Communication requires both a sender and receiver.

Competency – the ability to properly perform a specific task.

Condom catheter – an external catheter applied to males (Texas catheter).

Conduct – one's actions in general; behavior.

Confidential – personal; not known to others.

Confused – state of being mixed up.

Confusion – a mental state characterized by disorientation regarding time, place, or person.

Congestive heart failure (CHF) – the inability of the heart to pump an adequate quantity of blood.

Consent – permission granted voluntarily by a person in his/her (sound/clear) mind.

Constipation – the passage of unusually dry, hard stools.

Contaminated – exposed to germs.

Contracture – shortening of muscles and tendons, which causes deformity of joint and a decrease in joint motion and muscle wasting.

Contusion – an injury that does not break the skin, caused by a blow to the body and characterized by swelling, discoloration, and pain; a bruise.

Cyanotic – a bluish-gray color of the skin, lips, or nail beds due to lack of oxygen.

D

Dangle – to sit on the side of the bed with the legs over the edge of the mattress.

Deafness – inability to hear.

Death – a natural part of life where all vital functions of the body cease.

Decubitus ulcer – an inflammation, sore, or lesion that develops over areas where the skin and tissue underneath are injured due to a lack of blood flow; a bed sore or pressure ulcer.

Dehydration – loss of body's normal water content, which can affect both physical and mental functions.

Dementia – severe impairment of cognitive functions such as thinking, memory, and personality, comes on slowly and worsens over time; usually irreversible, depending on the cause of the dementia.

Dentures – artificial or “false” teeth.

Dependent – unable to care for one's self.

Depression – an abnormal emotional state characterized by feelings of sadness, worthlessness and emptiness.

Diabetes – a chronic disease characterized by insufficient insulin production or inability of the body to properly utilize the insulin produced.

Diagnosis – determining what kind of disease or medical condition a person has; the nurse assistant can find out by looking in the chart; the doctor determines the problem based on tests, observations, etc.

Diarrhea – frequent passage of liquid stool.

Digestion – process by which food is broken down, mechanically and chemically, and changed to a form that can be absorbed by the body.

Disorientation – the state of mental confusion or loss of bearings in relation to the sense of person, place, or time.

Distention – the state of being inflated or enlarged.

Diversionsary – to draw attention to something else or to amuse.

Durable Power of Attorney – a document through which a patient appoints another person to act as his agent in making decisions about financial and/or healthcare matters if he is unable to do so.

E

Edema – swelling due to an accumulation of watery fluid in the tissue.

Elimination – to rid the body of wastes, such as urine or stool.

Emotion – one's feelings.

Emphysema – respiratory condition in which the elasticity of the alveoli is lost, resulting in difficulty in breathing.

Employee Disqualification List (EDL) – a list of the names of any people who have been finally determined by the Department of Health and Senior Services, to have knowingly or recklessly abused or neglected a patient.

Enema – inserting a liquid solution into the rectum.

Esophagus – a tube connecting the throat to the stomach through which food passes.

Ethical – relating to a set of moral principles and values.

Ethics – the discipline that addresses what is good and bad and what is moral duty and obligation.

Evaluate – to decide if a course of action was the correct one to take.

Eversion – a turning outward.

Exploitation – illegal or improper use of a person’s property or resources to the degree that substantial risk of harm exists.

Extension – to straighten; to extend.

External rotation – to move the extremity in a circular motion away from the center of the body.

Extremities – the arms, legs, hands, and feet.

F

Family Care Safety Registry (FCSR) – a computerized interface between government agencies that helps ensure that persons who care for children, the elderly and the physically or mentally disabled can easily be screened.

Feces – waste products in the bowel; same as stool or BM.

Fever – elevation of body temperature above normal.

Flexion – to bend.

Flushed – reddened color of the skin.

Foot board – a piece of wood or plastic at the end of the bed for positioning the client’s feet.

Foot cradle – a metal or plastic frame over the foot of the bed that lifts the weight of the sheets off of the client’s feet.

Foreskin – loose skin covering the end of the penis.

Fracture – a broken bone.

G

Gait belt – canvas belt placed around the client’s waist to assist with ambulation and transfers.

Gangrene – death of tissue usually due to deficient or absent blood supply.

Geri-Chair – a reclining chair on wheels.

Germ – microorganism.

Glaucoma – increase of pressure within the eye, resulting in blindness if left untreated.

Grieving – physical and emotional responses to loss or separation.

H

Hallucination – sensory perceptions that seem real to the person experiencing them but are not perceived by others.

Heart attack/myocardial infarction (MI) – a blockage or clot occurring in an artery in the heart, resulting in chest pain due to tissue damage.

Hemiplegia – loss of sensation or movement in one side of the body.

Hemorrhage – excessive, uncontrolled bleeding.

Hemorrhoids – varicose veins in the rectum that can become painful, itch, and bleed.

Hospice – a type of care that provides comfort for terminally ill persons.

Hospice care – care provided to meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of patients with terminal illnesses and their families.

Hygiene – personal cleanliness.

Hyperextension – extensive extension.

Hypochondriosis – a chronic abnormal concern about the health of the body.

I

Immobility – unable to move.

Immunocompromised – an immune system weakened by disease or medication.

Impaction – hard stool that cannot pass from the rectum normally.

Incontinent – inability to control the passage of urine and/or stool.

Independent – self-reliant, able to care for oneself.

Indwelling urinary catheter (Foley™) – a sterile tube inserted through the urethra into the bladder to drain urine; held in place by a small inflated balloon.

Infection – invasion of the body by a disease-producing (pathogenic) microorganism.

Infection control – a method of preventing the spread of infection.

Inflammation – reaction of tissue to injury of any kind.

Inhale – to breathe in.

Internal rotation – to move the extremity in a circular motion toward the center of the body.

Invasion of privacy – a civil wrong that unlawfully makes public knowledge of any private or personal information without the consent of the wronged person.

Inversion – a turning inward (feet only).

J

Jaundice – yellow discoloration of skin due to bile.

K

Kidneys – filtering system of the body.

L

Labia – the skin folds that are on both sides of the urethra and vagina.

Laceration – wound produced by cutting or tearing the skin.

Larynx – the voice box.

Lateral – to the side.

Legal – relating to the law.

Living Will – a document that designates the client's wishes in the event that he is unable to speak for himself.

M

Malpractice – improper or negligent treatment of a client or patient resulting in damage or injury.

Mental illness – a disturbance of a person's emotional state characterized by impaired function and maladaptive behavior.

Mental Retardation Developmentally Disabled (MRDD) – a disorder characterized by below normal intellectual function and impaired psychological and social functioning.

Micro – small.

Microorganism – a very small living thing (a germ) that can only be seen with a microscope.

Milliliter (mL) – a metric unit used to measure liquid volume; 30mL = 1 ounce.

Mitered corner – a method of folding linens under a mattress that gives the bed a neat appearance.

Mobility – ability to move.

Morals – one’s own personal values.

Mucous membranes – tissues that secrete mucous such as those in the nose, mouth, lungs, and parts of the rectal and genital areas.

Mucus – sticky substance secreted by mucous membranes mainly in the lungs, nose, and parts of the rectal and genital areas.

N

Neglect – failure of person(s) responsible for an individual to provide necessary services to maintain the physical and mental health of the individual when such failure presents an imminent or probable danger to the individual.

Negligence – failure to perform in a reasonably prudent manner or by acceptable health care practices.

Nonintact skin – skin that is broken, chapped, cracked, or open.

NPO – abbreviation for nothing by mouth.

Nutrient – food that supplies the body with its necessary elements.

Nutrition – the process of taking in food and producing energy from it.

O

Obese – extremely over-weight.

Objective – way to reach a goal.

Obstruction – a blockage.

Ombudsman – one who speaks on behalf of another; a volunteer who helps clients in long term care facilities.

Orthostatic blood pressure changes – abnormally low blood pressure occurring when an individual assumes the standing posture.

Osteoporosis – a loss of minerals in the bone resulting in loss of bone density.

Ostomy – a surgical opening into the body.

Ovaries – glands in the female that produce ovum (eggs) and hormones.

Oxygen – a breathable; odorless, colorless gas.

P

Pain – an unpleasant sensation caused by stimulation of the nerve endings.

Pallor – paleness.

Paralyzed – absence of movement or sensation.

Paranoia – suspiciousness inappropriate to reality – individual feels that everyone is picking on him or out to get him.

Paraplegia – paralysis of legs.

Passive range of motion exercises – exercises ordered by a doctor to prevent complications; performed by In-Home Aides whose clients cannot perform the exercises independently.

Pathogens – microbes that cause disease.

Peri care – cleaning the genital and anal areas; part of bath or shower procedure or a separate procedure.

Perineal – the genital and anal areas.

Peristalsis – rhythmic contraction of muscle that forces food through the digestive tract.

Perpetrator – person who inflicts harm.

Pharynx – the throat.

Physical – relating to body and bodily functions.

Physical restraint – any manual method or physical or manual device, material, or equipment attached or adjacent to the client's body that the individual cannot remove easily and that restricts freedom of movement of normal access to one's body.

Plaque – sticky, transparent bacterial film found on teeth.

Pneumonia – inflammation of the lungs with fluid accumulation in the affected alveoli.

Posterior – toward the back.

Postmortem – after death.

Pressure ulcer – an inflammation, sore, or lesion that develops over areas where the

skin and tissue underneath are injured due to a lack of blood flow. Also called a bedsore decubitus ulcer.

Priority – that which should be considered or done first.

Privileged communication – any personal or private information that is relevant to a client's care that the client gave to medical personnel.

Pronation – to turn downward.

Prone – lying on one's abdomen with the head turned to the side.

Prosthesis – an artificial replacement for a body part.

Psychological – associated with the thought processes of the brain.

Pulse – the beat of the heart felt at an artery as a wave of blood passes through the artery.

Pulse rate – the number of heartbeats or pulses felt in one minute.

Purulent – containing pus.

Pus – thick yellowish secretion formed in certain kinds of inflammation.

Q

Quadriplegia/Tetraplegia – paralysis of arms and legs.

R

Range of motion (ROM) – the extent of movement of a joint (maximum flexion to maximum extension).

Reality orientation – a communication technique that helps a client who is experiencing temporary confusion become more aware of his/her surroundings.

Rectum – last six-eight inches of the large intestine.

Rehabilitation – restoring of an ill or injured client so he will be able to help himself to live at his/her highest potential.

Residential care facility (RCF) I or II – a facility licensed by the state of Missouri to provide 24-hour room, board, and protective oversight. The facility may provide assistance with medications and care during recovery from short-term illness. Also called an assisted living facility.

Residue – what remains of something after a part is removed.

Resistance – ability to fight off.

Respirations – act of breathing in or out of the lungs (inhalation/exhalation).

Responsible party – a family member/friend of the client who the client designates in writing to handle matters and receive reports related to the client's general condition.

Restorative care – the process by which a disabled or ill person is helped to reach the highest possible level of wellness, considering his/her limitations.

Retention – inability to empty the bladder.

Rigor mortis – temporary rigidity of muscles of the body occurring after death.

Rotation – to move a joint in a circular motion.

Roughage/Fiber – indigestible fiber of fruits, vegetables, and cereal that acts as a stimulus to aid intestinal peristalsis (e.g., bran, potato skins, fruit skins).

S

Schizophrenia – a mental disorder characterized by distortion of reality.

Scrotum – the pouch containing the testicles.

Seizure – sudden, periodic attacks of muscles contracting and relaxing.

Shearing – tissue damage that occurs when the body slides on a surface that moves the skin in one direction and the underlying bones in the opposite direction.

Slander – to make any oral defamatory false remark about another; spoken words that tend to damage the reputation of another.

Social – relating to human society; getting along with others.

Sphincter muscles – a circle of muscle fibers around the outlet of the urethra and rectum that is normally closed but can be relaxed to allow passage of urine and stool.

Sphincter stimulation – stimulation of the opening of the anus performed during a bowel movement.

Sputum – waste material (mucus) coughed up from lungs or trachea.

Sterile – free of all germs.

Stoma – an opening.

Sundowning – phenomenon when confusion becomes worse in evening.

Supination – to turn upward.

Supine – lying on one’s back.

Suppository – a semisolid substance that many contain medicine that dissolves when inserted into the rectum or vagina.

T

TED™ hose – elastic stockings applied to the legs to reduce inflammation of the veins and the formation of blood clots.

Temperature – measurement of heat within the body.

Tetraplegia/Quadriplegia – paralysis of arms and legs.

Toxin – a poisonous substance.

Transfer – to move.

Transient ischemic attack (TIA) – an episode of poor circulation to the brain characterized by visual disturbances, dizziness, weakness, numbness, or loss of consciousness. The attack is usually brief, lasting a few minutes.

Transmitted – transferred or spread.

Tuberculosis – an infection, primarily of the lung, from mycobacterium tuberculosis.

U

Unconscious – an individual’s lack of awareness.

Ureters – tubes that carry urine from the kidneys to the urinary bladder.

Urethra – the small passage from the bladder through which urine leaves the body.

Urinary catheter – a sterile tube inserted into the bladder to drain urine.

Urinate (void) – to pass urine.

Urostomy – an artificial opening made in the abdominal wall to allow the passage of urine through a stoma (opening).

V

Validation therapy – a technique that creates a climate of acceptance by encouraging the client who is confused to explore personal thoughts; it helps to confirm the emotions being experienced.

Ventilate – give air to.

Void – to pass urine.

Vital signs – temperature, pulse, respirations, and blood pressure.

W

Wandering – aimless walking, which may result in a client becoming lost.