

# The Problem-Solving Process: Resolution Guidelines for Practice

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## A Quick Reference for Problem Solving

The following list of questions is a “ready-reference” to use in thinking through issues and how to proceed. This list is a continuation of “The Problem-Solving Process: Investigation Guidelines for Practice,” contained in the Investigation module of this curriculum. It is not a comprehensive list nor is it rigid in its order of steps. It’s a guide to help clarify thinking and to ensure that you haven’t overlooked a key part of the problem-solving process. As previously mentioned, there will be times when problems can be quickly addressed. Resolving problems will not always require such a detailed analysis and resolution process as the following includes.

You can also use this reference to guide your conversations with residents and family members who turn to you for advice regarding working through issues on their own.

### *Stage 2: Analysis and Planning*

#### Analysis

##### *A. Why did the problem occur?*

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- Was there an oversight on the part of the facility staff?
- Was there deliberate retaliation against the resident?
- Is the problem related to policies or procedures of the facility?
- Are there communication problems or trust issues between the resident/relatives and staff?
- Is the facility habitually short-staffed?
- Does the resident’s physical/mental condition make good care extremely difficult to provide?
- Is the quality of care related to the resident’s method of payment, e.g., Medicaid vs. private pay?

##### *B. What justification or explanation does the facility offer for the problem?*

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- There is no problem.
- The problem is the resident or the resident’s family member.
- We are doing all that the regulations require.
- What the resident wants is beyond the terms of our contract or licensure requirements.
- We aren’t paid enough to offer that type of service.

### ***C. Who or what is responsible for the problem?***

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- Facility staff failed to perform their duties properly.
- State/federal regulations are lax or confusing regarding the issue(s) raised by the complaint.
- Third-party reimbursement programs may not pay for certain procedures, services or items.
- Independent professionals, e.g. doctor, physical therapist, may not leave clear instructions for resident and staff to follow.
- The resident or family may be contributing to the problem.

### **Consider possible solutions, keeping the outcome the resident wants as your focus.**

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- What might resolve the problem?
- What will it take to keep it from recurring?
- How many possible solutions can be identified?

### **Identify potential obstacles to resolution**

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- What are potential barriers to achieving the outcome the resident wants?
- How might each barrier be avoided or overcome?

### ***Stage 3: Resolution And Follow-Up***

#### **Choose an approach**

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- What strategies might be effective in getting the outcome the resident wants?
- Who will need to be involved in determining and agreeing to the outcome?
- What information needs to be provided?
- Seek feedback and assistance from the resident before proceeding with resolution.
  - Discuss your thoughts about approaching resolution with the resident.
  - Make adjustments based upon what the resident says.

### **Pursue resolution: act to resolve the problem**

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- Move forward with the plan you and the resident have developed.
- Be flexible with alternatives as long as they are acceptable to the resident.
- Obtain a resolution that is clear regarding what will happen, when, and who will be involved.
- Be sure the resident understands and agrees with the resolution.
- Know who to contact if the resolution is not adequately implemented.

### **Evaluate the outcome**

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- Check back with the resident to evaluate the outcome.
- Is the problem solved? Is it partially solved?
- If not, look for new approaches or information, etc., and start again.
- If the problem cannot be resolved within the facility, consider other avenues for resolution.