

The Last Five Minutes Matter (continued)

Take One Final Look

Before ending the visit, pause and review the immediate surroundings. Depending on the client's care plan and authorized services, consider:

- Is the client seated or positioned safely?
- Is the client's walker, cane, or other mobility aid within reach?
- Is the telephone or approved emergency device accessible?
- Are frequently used items nearby?
- Have spills or immediate tripping hazards been addressed?
- Are authorized food or beverages available?
- Have assigned tasks been completed?
- Does the client understand that the visit is ending?
- Is there anything important that must be reported to the office?

This is not an invitation to begin performing extra tasks outside the care plan. It is a final safety check of the work already completed and the situation being left behind.

Never Leave Without Saying Goodbye

A client should not have to wonder whether the caregiver is still in the home.

Before leaving, clearly tell the client that the visit has ended. If the client has difficulty hearing, make sure the

message is understood. Do not simply call out from another room and leave.

A proper goodbye also gives the client an opportunity to mention an immediate concern. The client may have forgotten to ask for a permitted beverage, report that they feel unwell, or say that an important item is out of reach.

The caregiver should listen, respond within the care plan, and contact the office when necessary.

Do Not Stay Without Authorization

Paying attention during the final minutes does not mean extending the visit indefinitely. Caregivers should not independently add time to a shift, even when the client would enjoy additional company or asks the caregiver to remain.

If a client has an unmet need that cannot be addressed within the scheduled visit, contact the office. The office can determine what action is appropriate.

Caregivers must also accurately record the time they begin and end work. Changing the recorded time to make a late arrival, early departure, or unauthorized extension appear acceptable is never appropriate.

Report Before You Forget

Important information should be communicated promptly. Do not assume you will remember to call later, especially

when traveling to another client or handling other responsibilities.

If the client reported a fall, showed an unusual change, refused an important assigned service, lacked necessary supplies, or experienced another concern, follow reporting procedures before the information is forgotten.

A completed task list does not mean the visit was complete if important information was never communicated.

End the Visit as Carefully as You Began It

The beginning of a visit establishes trust. The end of a visit leaves the final impression.

Those last five minutes may be when the caregiver notices that the client is more confused than usual, discovers that a needed item is out of reach, or prevents a possible fall by returning a walker to the proper place.

Do not treat the end of the visit as empty time. Use it purposefully.

Finish the assigned work. Check the immediate surroundings. Speak with the client. Report concerns. Say goodbye.

The last five minutes matter because the caregiver is not simply leaving the home. The caregiver is helping prepare the client for the time until the next helping hand arrives.