

"JUST NOT RIGHT"

Many individuals are not able to tell us with words how they feel or what exactly is bothering them. But they can and do frequently tell us by a change in the way they act or the sounds they make. Often, it is the direct service provider who knows the individuals the best and is able to pick up small changes that could be signs of illness. When such changes happen, direct service providers often describe the individual as "not right", "something is wrong", or "not themselves". How the change is described to a Health Care Provider (HCP) will make a difference in the HCP's ability to understand the value of the observation, figure out what the problem is, and how to treat it. When you notice that someone is "not right", it may be helpful to think about describing your observations by comparing them to how the individual usually behaves or appears. When you look at the person or think about what you are seeing, what is different from what you usually see?

- Do they have a different **look on their face**? Tired, afraid, in pain?
- Are they sitting or **moving differently**? Protecting a hand or foot, refusing to take a position that is normal for them?
- Is there a change in the type of **sounds** a person is making? Are they more highly pitched? Or perhaps they are not making any sounds at all.
- What is their **temperature**?
- What is their **breathing** like?
- What is their **color** like? Pale or red? Blue around the lips?
- Have you seen this before? When? What was going on?
- Has there been a recent **new medication**, adjustment to medication or diagnosis that might help explain the change?
- Sometimes a **significant change** in a person's life or relationships will cause behavioral or physical signs. Has there been a death or loss of a person or a change in a routine for them?
- Are they eating and drinking? If so, is this different than their usual pattern?
- Is there a change in their bowel or bladder habits?
- Has there been a change in their willingness or ability to participate in activities?
- When did you notice this change? Did it just start today, or has this been a gradual change?

IF YOU NOTICE CHANGES, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Call 911 if this happens:

- The change is very sudden.
- The person looks very sick.
- The person won't wake up.
- The person appears to be having difficulty breathing or appears blue or dusky.

In other situations:

- Call or talk to your supervisor, nurse or health care consultant about what you see or hear
- Write down what you see or hear and share the information with other staff.
- Talk about what you see and hear with other staff and write down what they report.
- Make a physician appointment.
- If able, obtain vital signs.
- Keep notes of what you see and hear and bring them with you to the HCP appointment to assist the HCP in diagnosing the problem.

