A Fresh Start with Culture Change: Moving Beyond the Status Quo

Are you tired of spending most of your time and energy simply maintaining the status quo? Are you ready to explore how to increase the probability of success, and then sustain it? The development of a new tool is designed to assist in reaching far beyond the status quo to optimize resident and staff outcomes for existing, renovated, and new projects.

For the last three years a group of dedicated volunteers from various backgrounds have participated and contributed to the creation of a consensus based guideline that focuses on a sustainable process for culture change that assists organizations and operations to facilitate a person-centered approach to development and design.

The guide is called the Senior Living Sustainability Guide™ (SLSG) and the goal is to provide information for users on different stages of culture change and project development. A predevelopment analysis process for successful site selection and tools to define a senior living project are included. Defining the social-cultural context in which a project takes place; including identifying resident and staff population type and background is a major first step in understanding the appropriate care model for an organization. This information provides a framework for a proposed project.

Once a project direction is determined, process information is provided to further develop the detail of a specific project through four key dimensions; resident, organization, operations, and physical setting. Each dimension includes an overview description, identification of the principles of the core values and their application and implications, establishment of an integrated team, elements and drivers, desired experiences and outcomes, means for sustaining operational processes, and documentation and indicators as relevant to each specific dimension. The dimensions are intended to build upon one another; however they are each stand alone sections that can be utilized independently as required by a project.

Sustainability is about benchmarking all of the outcomes, having a process for continual improvement, and scheduling and budgeting adjustments and changes based upon the results of the feedback obtained. There is an absolute need for creating a process for continual improvement through commissioning, post occupancy evaluation, LEAN processes, flow charting, and other means for establishing consistent methods for evaluation. Once baseline data is established a continual improvement plan can be established for feedback to be integrated into all four dimensions.

Sustainability is not a destination, but a process that has the ultimate desire of improving resident and staff outcomes. The ultimate measure of success is fulfilling and maintaining the resident experiences established at the onset of the project.

It is time for culture change in senior living and way past the time for accepting the status quo. The Senior Living Sustainability Guide™ is a tool for its users to facilitate the opportunity for fulfilling, positive change to take place. The process outlined will assist in reaching the ultimate goals; resident and staff satisfaction and high quality of life.
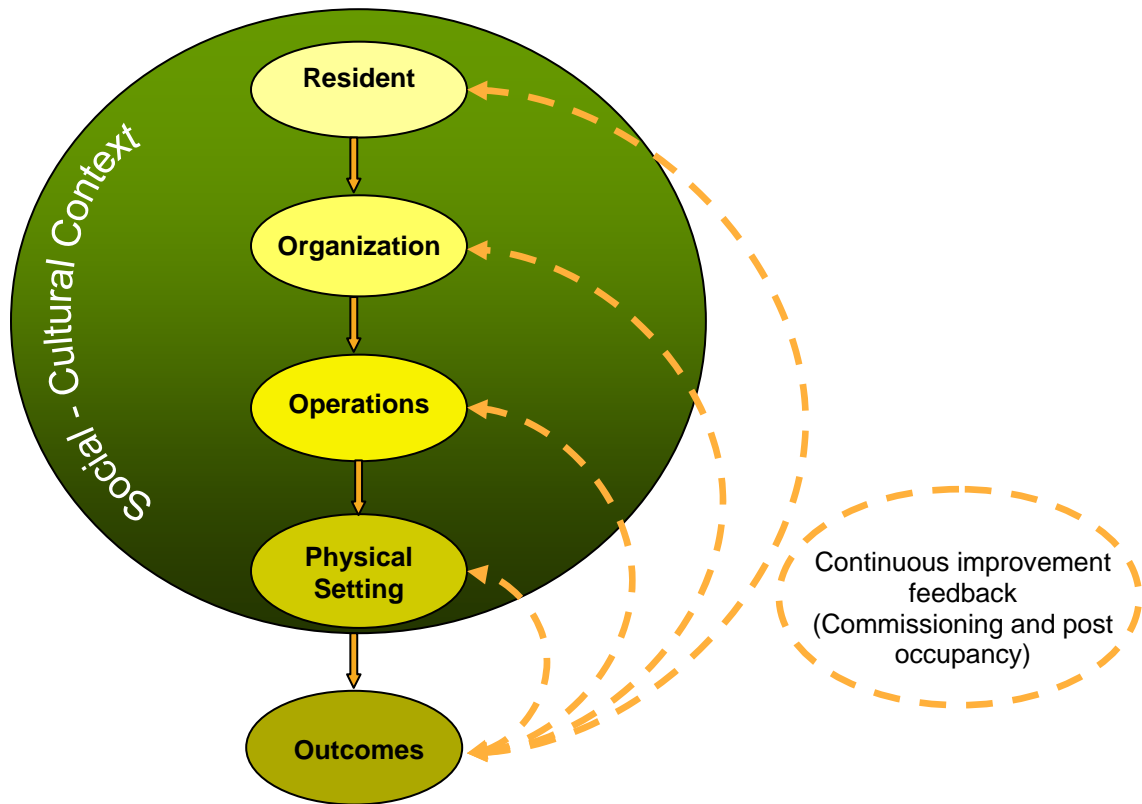
The guide and related checklists shall be available in April, 2011 at www.withseniorsinmind.org for free download. For more information, please contact Jane Rohde at jane@jsrassociates.net.