

2026 Annual PADONA  
Conference



Incidents and Accidents  
Elopement



PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF  
DIRECTORS OF NURSING ADMINISTRATION

# Elopement

Why Immediate Jeopardy?



# Objectives



Identify dangers associated with elopements



Identify why CMS may elevate elopement to Immediate Jeopardy level citation



Identify how to prevent resident elopement by identifying resident risk/facility risk and recommendations on systems for monitoring residents.



Identify the importance of elopement auditing and drills in relation to resident safety



# Immediate Jeopardy F689

F-tag 689 (Free of Accident Hazards/Supervision/Devices) was the No. 1 tag cited at the immediate jeopardy (IJ) level in 2023—and remains at the top halfway into 2024, according to QCOR data accessed on June 30, 2024



# F 689 Incidents and Accidents

- Intent of the regulation is to ensure the facility provides
- an environment that is free from accidents and hazards
- which the facility has control and provides supervision
- and assistive devices to each resident
- **to prevent avoidable accidents.**
- **This includes and is not limited to “elopement”**



# Avoidable Accidents

**Avoidable Accidents are accidents that occurred because the facility failed to:**

- Identify environmental hazards and/or assess individual resident risk of an accident, including the need for supervision and/or assistive devices;
- Evaluate and analyze the hazards and risks and eliminate them, if possible, or, if not possible, identify and implement measures to reduce the hazards/risks as much as possible;



# Avoidable Accidents

- Implement interventions, including adequate supervision and assistive devices, consistent with a resident's needs, goals, care plan and current professional standards of practice in order to eliminate the risk, if possible, and, if not, reduce the risk of an accident;
- Monitor the effectiveness of the interventions and modify the care plan as necessary, in accordance with current professional standards of practice.



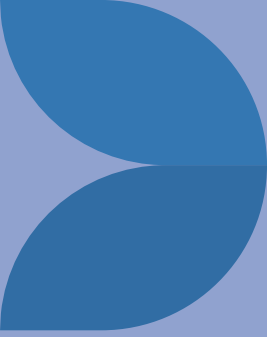
# Common Avoidable Accidents

Elopement

Hot liquid  
(coffee  
burns)

Choking





## Let's Explore Elopements

Elopement occurs when a resident leaves the premises or a designated safe area without the facility's knowledge or supervision.



# Important to Note

Elopement isn't limited to a resident exiting the facility entirely.

**A resident being “lost” or unsupervised within the facility**

**especially in hazardous or unauthorized areas such as mechanical rooms, storage areas, kitchens, or stairwells**

Can be considered elopement under F689 if supervision and safety protocols are breached



# **Dangers Associated with Elopement**



# Dangers from Elopement- Facility Assessment

**What does your Facility Assessment say?**

Does your facility Assessment identify your hazard vulnerability?

What does the facility assessment identify as your risk?

**Are you in a rural vs. urban area?**

Both areas have different risk factors

Both areas propose possible extreme outcomes



# Dangers from Elopements

Exposure to extreme temperatures

Dehydration

Injuries from falls

Medical complications

Traffic accidents



# Immediate Jeopardy

Due to the severity of outcomes associated with elopement, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) frequently cites facilities under

**F689 – Free of Accident Hazards/Supervision/Devices,**  
often at the **Immediate Jeopardy** level.



# Why Immediate Jeopardy?

Most times the problem is related to the nursing home either not following its own elopement policy and procedure or not following standards of practice

*And/Or*

When noncompliance causes a serious adverse outcome (i.e., serious injury, harm, impairment, or death to a resident) or creates the likelihood that a serious adverse outcome will occur, the facility must take immediate corrective action to prevent the serious injury, serious harm, serious impairment or death from occurring or recurring.



# Elopement Immediate Jeopardy Guidelines

**Failure of the facility staff to supervise resident(s)** - This failure to supervise may include, but is not limited to, failure to visually supervise exit doors that are not alarmed; failure to respond to alarm devices intended to notify staff when a resident leaves the building; turning off alarm devices combined with failure to visually supervise exit doors; failure to provide exit door alarms or maintain alarm devices in working condition; failure to properly investigate the sounding of an exit alarm.



# Immediate Jeopardy Guidelines -Elopement

**Resident elopement from a facility unnoticed by any facility staff - Evidence that, unknown to facility staff, a resident has eloped from the building and is outside of the facility.**

**Resident's health status is such that they have insufficient safety skills and wandering outside of the facility puts them at risk for serious injury or death**



# Elopement Immediate Jeopardy Guidelines

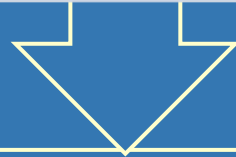
- An imminent hazard to the resident's health and safety is identified - Surveyors must document an imminent hazard that puts the resident at immediate risk of serious injury or death.
- An environmental hazard in the immediate vicinity of the eloped resident must be identified.
  - These would include, but are not limited to,
    - high traffic roadways
    - bodies of water
    - ditches or any similar ground hazard that may cause falls
    - construction sites
    - dense woods or crops



# So, Let's back up a bit... Why do residents wander/exit seek?

Exit-seeking behavior often stems from unmet needs. These may include:

A desire to "go home"	Pain or physical discomfort	Disorientation or confusion	Stress or environmental overstimulation	Boredom, loneliness, or excess energy	Medication side effects	Searching for a familiar person or item
-----------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------	---	---------------------------------------	-------------------------	---



**FYI- Residents with mental health disorders and/or substance use disorders may also be at higher risk for elopement**



# How to prevent elopement risk for wandering/exit seeking residents

Facilities should adopt a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to prevent and manage elopement

- **Identify and Flag at Risk Residents**
- **Secure High-Risk Areas**
- **Strengthen Monitoring**
- **Respond Rapidly to Missing Residents**
- **Train and Test Staff Responsiveness**
- **Use Data to Drive Safety Improvement**



# Identify and Flag at Risk Residents

Conduct  
elopement/wandering  
assessments

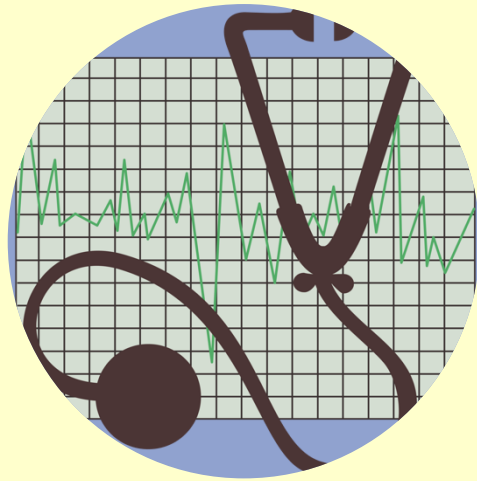
- Complete assessments on admission, quarterly, after incidents and upon any change in condition

Develop a person-  
centered care plan  
using assessment data

- Person centered interventions, environmental adjustments, therapeutic activities, and alarming devices.



# Elopement risk assessment



<b>Resident:</b> <b>Admission:</b> <b>Category:</b> NA	<b>Effective Date:</b> <b>Date of Birth:</b> <b>Physician:</b>	<b>Location:</b> <b>Score:</b> NA
--	--	--------------------------------------

**A.**

1. Admission Status

- 1. New or recent admission
- 2. Readmission
- 3. Existing resident

2. Physical ability to leave the building

- 1. Physically able to leave the building independently
- 2. Able to leave the building with assistance of another person
- 3. Unable to leave the building without help from staff

3. Locomotion

- 1. Ambulates independently (with or without assistive device)
- 2. Propels self in wheelchair
- 3. Requires assistance with locomotion

**Pertinent Diagnoses (Check all that apply)**

- 4a.  Dementia
- 4b.  Alzheimer's
- 4c.  Depression
- 4d.  Manic Depression
- 4e.  Anxiety Disorder
- 4f.  Schizophrenia
- 4g.  Delusions
- 4h.  Hallucinations
- 4i.  None of the above

5. Elopement History

- 1. History of elopement/elopement attempts from this/previous facility

# Secure High-Risk Areas

## Evaluate and secure

- Evaluate and secure exit doors, elevators, stairwells and windows.

## Maintain

- Maintain and regularly test door alarms and wander management systems

## Consider

- Consider external hazards such as busy roads, bodies of water and extreme weather which should be reflected in your facility assessment.

## Implement

- Implement clear protocols/policies and educate staff on policies

## Review

- Review high-risk residents and potentially vulnerable areas regularly during safety and QAPI meetings



# Strengthen Monitoring

## Maintain

- Maintain an updated list of Residents at risk with photos and medical details at identified exit areas per your protocol

## Monitor

- Monitor resident's electronic devices to verify placement and functioning routinely

## Identify

- Identify elopement risk on care plans, Kardex and/or assignment sheets.



# Respond Rapidly to Missing Residents

Respond	Respond immediately to door alarms with facility-wide head counts
Implement	Implement incident command center to control information
Utilize	Utilize a timeline search to document step in your missing resident protocol that includes defined roles, search protocols and investigation procedures.



# Timeline Search ...



Resident Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time Resident was unaccounted for: \_\_\_\_\_

Where and When Resident Was Last Seen: \_\_\_\_\_

Administrator Notified: \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

Director of Nursing Notified: \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

911/Emergency Notified: \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

Resident Representative Notified: \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

(Name) Response:  YES  NO  Message

Attending Physician Notified: \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

911/Emergency Personnel Arrived: \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

Elapsed Time Until Resident Located: \_\_\_\_\_ Hours \_\_\_\_\_ Minute

Where and When Resident Was Located: \_\_\_\_\_

Condition of Resident When Located (full body assessment & vital signs) \_\_\_\_\_

Outside Temperature and Clothing Resident Was Wearing at the Time: \_\_\_\_\_

# Train and Test Staff Responsiveness



Provide regular training on identifying, preventing and responding to elopement risks.



**Perform competency checks and elopement drills across all shifts**

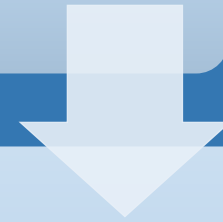


Address gaps in practice related to resident identification systems and alarm responsiveness



# Use Data to Drive Safety Improvement

Include elopement incident reviews in QAPI meetings



Use data to identify trends and implement continuous quality improvement initiatives



# Elopement Risk Auditing

Resident Name	Order for elopement device	Date of elopement risk assessment	Result of risk assessment	Elopement risk on care plan	Picture of resident in elopement book
	Yes/No		At risk/Not at Risk	Yes/No	Yes/No
	Yes/No		At risk/Not at Risk	Yes/No	Yes/No
	Yes/No		At risk/Not at Risk	Yes/No	Yes/No
	Yes/No		At risk/Not at Risk	Yes/No	Yes/No
	Yes/No		At risk/Not at Risk	Yes/No	Yes/No
	Yes/No		At risk/Not at Risk	Yes/No	Yes/No
	Yes/No		At risk/Not at Risk	Yes/No	Yes/No
	Yes/No		At risk/Not at Risk	Yes/No	Yes/No
	Yes/No		At risk/Not at Risk	Yes/No	Yes/No



**By prioritizing proactive risk management strategies, nursing facilities can better safeguard their residents. It is important to foster a safer, more supportive environment for those at risk for wandering and elopement.**



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

# References

F689 Accident Survey Citations – AAPACN

Safeguarding Residents – F689 Managing Elopement in LTC -  
Proactive LTC Consulting

F-Tag Help -- F689 Free of Accident  
Hazards/Supervision/Devices

QSO19-09 Memo Appendix Q SOM  
Elopement IJ Guidelines

