

Let's Get Real!

Susan Ryan, Senior Director, The Green House Project

A friend (I'll call him Todd) told me recently of an experience he'd had while helping a loved one navigate through a rehab stay in a skilled nursing facility (SNF). It's a five-star rated community with an excellent reputation that recently spent millions of dollars on remodeling to appeal to this population. The problem is that while the luxurious amenities, state-of-the-art gym, and chef-prepared meals were appealing on many levels, the clinical care fell woefully short.

You see Todd, who diligently checked in with staff about his father's progress, was often unable to get his concerns addressed by the nurse overseeing his care, who frequently passed him off to other members of the interdisciplinary team.

As someone who worked as a nurse in skilled nursing for many years, I was saddened to learn of his experience, but not terribly surprised. In my opinion, this issue illustrates that providing excellent care is not just about the physical accoutrements. Sure, space is a consideration, as is design, but it must also be about deeply knowing the person, no matter the length of stay, and providing a comprehensive plan that is unique to that person.

I truly believe that had the care been provided in a Green House home, the experience would have been far different. I can state this with some degree of confidence because today, some 12 percent of Green House homes provide Medicare short-term rehabilitation. Rather than simulating homelike environments in a therapy gym, functional rehab is provided each day in a Green House home, a *real home*, to ensure maximum success upon discharge. Those who undergo rehab in a Green House home are able to practice activities of daily living with their core rehabilitation team in the common areas of the home, while more personal tasks such as bathing, dressing, and toileting can be done in the privacy of their own private bedroom and bathroom. Family-style dining occurs within an intentional community, where individuals form relationships with staff and other rehab 'guests' and encourage one another's progress.

Stated simply, it's *real* rehab in a *real home*.

But don't take my word for it—there is evidence. Evaluation and research of some sites have demonstrated lower hospital re-admission rates and high consumer demand. In other words, short-term rehab in Green House homes have proven that it can be delivered in a *real* home environment while also yielding positive clinical and financial outcomes.

Chelsea, Mass.-based Leonard Florence Center for Living (LFCL) was the first Green House model to incorporate short-term rehab in three of its ten-home building in 2010. In addition to helping them create a financial balance to their building, through strategic marketing, making connections with Boston area hospitals and accountable care organizations, and referrals from elders and their families, LFCL has become a choice provider of short-term rehab in their community. LFCL's average occupancy is at 95% with an average daily Medicare rate of \$600, and an average length of stay at 14 days or less.

When Pompano Beach, Fla.-based John Knox Village built its 12 Green House homes in 2015, the plan included dedicating four of those homes to short-term rehab. Again, strategic marketing efforts, a person-centered focus, and therapy occurring in a *real home*, have generated positive outcomes including: a 99% average daily census, an average daily Medicare rate of \$550, and the largest Medicare census in the county.

For both communities, short-term rehab has created an opportunity to stay true to their mission while providing high-quality, integrated, person-centered care and positive outcomes, including decreased length of stay, higher overall satisfaction, and decreased rehospitalizations. These positive outcomes reinforce the significance of the Green House core values, *real home*, *meaningful life*, and *empowered staff*, as well as the essential tenets of culture change, to be foundational to success.

We recently launched a new initiative known as Green House 2.0, which encompasses a host of innovative partnerships and efforts designed to improve the lives of people at many ages, abilities, and levels of care. Short-term rehab is one element of this initiative.

It is my hope that Green House 2.0 elevates the visibility of this relatively new but successful element of The Green House Project and illuminates the multifaceted vision of Green House homes, which live by the core values of meaningful life, real home, and empowered staff.