Importance of Communicating Behavioral Triggers

What is a behavior trigger?
A trigger refers to something that affects one's emotional state, by causing extreme overwhelm or distress. A trigger may bring up specific thought patterns or influence behavior. Depending on the clients you serve examples of behavioral triggers may consist of the inability to inform you of pain or feeling ill, an inability to inform you of a want or need or feeling betrayed or simply bored and not knowing what to do.

Why should you know your client's behavioral triggers?
Triggers may produce very uncomfortable emotional or psychiatric symptoms, such as anxiety, panic, discouragement, despair, and aggression. A client reacting to triggers is normal, but as a caregiver if you do not recognize them and respond to them appropriately, this may cause a downward spiral, making the situation worse. When working with your clients, if their behavioral triggers are not recognized, this may lead to a situation where you or your client become injured. The key to preventing a behavioral incident is to not place your client in a situation that exposes them to those things that may trigger their adverse behavior.

Have you observed a client becoming agitated because triggers were not identified? What happened?

Consider the following scenario.
Jennifer, a residential aide working for a group home, had just returned to work after having the weekend off. She learned from a few co-workers that a new client had been admitted during her absence. Jennifer was told he was a tall man, in his late 40's, who is mostly pleasant but at times can become agitated to the point of him throwing things and yelling at staff. Jennifer slightly alarmed was waiting for the morning meeting to begin so she could learn more about her new client.

Discuss with your staff what should be communicated during the meeting so Jennifer can work safely with her new client. Please use the questions below to help facilitate your discussion:

What are the triggers to avoid that escalate the behavior of the client?
  Identify common triggers

What should they do if the client's behavior is already escalated?
  Identify commonly used de-escalation techniques used with your clients and discuss what they are too do if these fail

Where are these triggers documented (behavior care plan, daily client notes) and how are they communicated to all staff?
  All clients need to be discussed daily to communicate changes

How will they be informed of changes or updates to the client's behavior plan?
  Identify your policy and procedures to inform staff of changes to your behavior plans