



New Mexico Health Care Association
New Mexico Center for Assisted Living

Your Association ... Your Decisions ... Your Directions



Best Practices in Staff Retention: What Employees Really Want

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Staff Retention: Objectives

1. **Learn 5 Best practices to implement and achieve a decrease in overall staff turnover**
2. **Identify 3 reasons why staff chooses to leave and/or stay**
3. **Discuss some differences between what staff “says” and what management perceptions are regarding the feedback**
4. **Identify 3 ways a facility can improve the onboarding process**

Staff Retention: Overview of Grant



Grant Purpose

The New Mexico Health Care Association/New Mexico Center for Assisted Living (NMHCA/NMCAL) received a 3-year Civil Monetary Penalty Fund (CMP) grant to assist facilities in improving their staff retention rates. **The** grant provides funding for NMHCA/NMCAL to work with facilities in the implementation of best practices designed to retain an experienced workforce. The NMHCA/NMCAL staffing project is intended to work with individual facilities to identify their specific staff retention challenges and help them develop strategies to address those obstacles through random employee interviews and pre-visit summaries.



Staff Retention: Grant Overview Continued

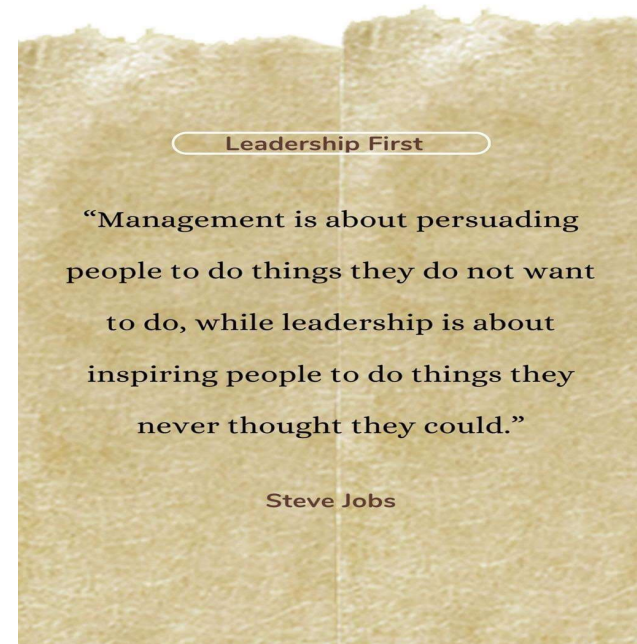
To gain insight into the staff of New Mexico Nursing facilities, NMHCAA/NMCAL spoke with staff members from various departments. These staff members were chosen randomly as they performed their normal daily shift duties.

Each facility was asked to fill out a pre-visit summary so that existing program information, wages, turnover information etc., was available prior to the visit, so the interviewers were informed. Not all facilities completed the summary prior to the visit, but this did not affect the interviews.



Staff Retention: Grant Overview Continued

The results of the interviews completed to-date have been both unique and similar across all facilities AND across all departments within the same facility.



What Do Staff Say About On-Boarding

The interview processes and first day experiences of the newer staff members interviewed showed various extremes. Facilities have begun to rely on video interviews and recorded programs to inform new hires about benefits, policies, etc., and employees overall stated they had very little human interaction with facility staff the first few days or longer. Almost all new employees relayed they need more human interaction with the onboarding process.

One staff member reported coming to work the first day as instructed only to be sent home because no one knew what to do with her.

What Can Facilities Do to Improve On-Boarding

—YOU—
NEVER
get a second
CHANCE
TO MAKE A
Great
—**FIRST**—
IMPRESSION

Make your first impression count and create connections.

Peer-to-peer facility tours as part of the interview process serves a dual purpose.

First, it allows staff members to be part of the interview process and they maybe able to provide insight into the potential employee that video interviews don't offer. Help the interviewing peer with questions they may want to ask and what they might want to look for such as how the interviewee interacted with residents during the tour; how did they interact with other staff; did they seem interested or distracted, etc. Be sure to ask the interviewing peer how the interview went, and what they liked or disliked about the possible new hire; would they be a good addition to the staff? Both Pros and cons should be discussed.

What Can Facilities Do to Improve On-Boarding

Second, it allows the potential employee the opportunity to meet potential coworkers and residents and allows them to feel like part of the team. One of the more consistent comments from staff is that they do this work because of the residents, and seeing positive interactions can help with creating those connections.



What Can Facilities Do to Improve On-Boarding

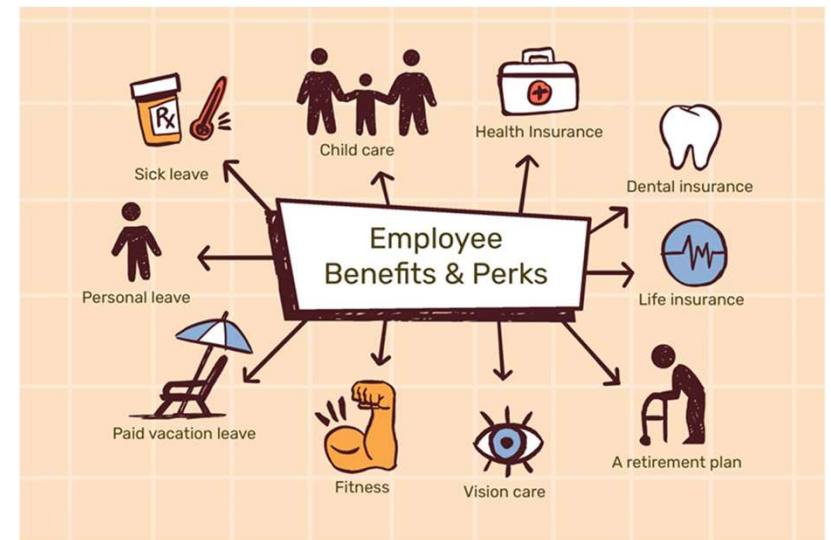
Video Orientation – break it up – have a staff member be there to ask and answer questions – Make sure facility expectations are clear, don't go longer than a week before someone sits down and discusses how the new employee is doing, is the facility meeting their expectations as well?

Schedule 30, 60 and/or 90 day follow-ups for new onboarding. Ensure there is an annual evaluation allowing employee to voice any concerns, challenges etc.



What do Staff Say About Benefits?

Most of the time wages were mentioned in terms of employee-perceived pay cuts when moving from an agency position to a permanent position. NMHCA/NMCAL interviewed a number of staff who moved to permanent positions and stated they felt the significant difference in wages made them regret the move when coupled with the expense of the benefits.



What do Staff Say About Benefits?

A few staff expressed concern that perceived advancement opportunities didn't come with noticeable wage increases, i.e., CNA to CMA, and felt that accepting more responsibility should come with a wage increase.

It was also communicated to NMHCA/NMCAL that benefits were not clearly understood by all facility staff members. Many staff reported not being aware of benefits such as employee referral bonuses, educational payment assistance programs, advancement opportunities, etc.

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions on Benefits and Benefit Offerings

Offering a career ladder for employees is a benefit many employees would like to see. Opportunities to advance with the company will help build loyalty. Ensure the HR manager is knowledgeable enough to answer questions or requests about moving up in positions or even opportunities for lateral moves to other departments. Stagnation in a staff member decreases creativity and motivation and many times can be a reason for leaving.



What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions on Benefits and Benefit Offerings

Ensure your staff knows about an educational assistance/reimbursement program. This is important to some employees, and they need to know the criteria for obtaining assistance.

Does your program include all employee participation?



What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions on Benefits and Benefit Offerings



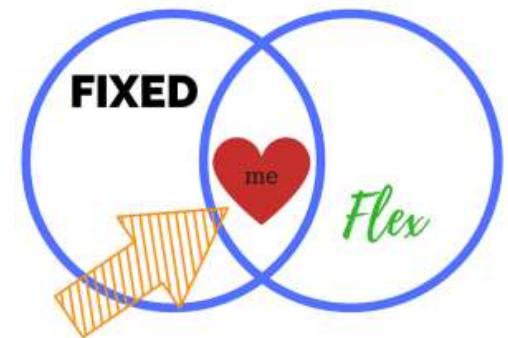
Look at employee referral bonus programs. A good referral program can encourage your staff to bring people they are familiar with and will enjoy working with, and that they know will stay.

Incentivizes referrals for part-time work as well

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions on Benefits and Benefit Offerings

Look at the possibility and/or implementation of flex scheduling for staff. Give employees in each department a schedule and let them fill out the days they want to work with boundaries set such as having to work one weekend out of 6, half shifts shared on holidays etc. Flex scheduling has proven to increase empowerment with staff, decreases call-out days as employees have the opportunity to schedule days they want or need off the next month. Start with a smaller department and evaluate what works and what doesn't, learn from the mistakes and encourage the breakthroughs.

Also, consider alternatives to full and part time hours. There are nurses out there who would like to work 1-2 days a week to keep their skills up and others who might want to work part-time while their kids are in school.



What Do Staff Really Say About Management

Great employees quit jobs because of poor management not because of the work.

Staff at all levels were both complementary and critical of management at all levels. Perceptions that upper management was off-limits and not part of the team were wide-spread. Staff expressed that criticism wasn't usually constructive and that facility-wide training for all when one staff member or department had an issue felt like punishment and created resentment among the staff rather than solving the problem. Staff felt that some staff members weren't held accountable for call-outs, being late, and poor performance, which again created resentment among staff. They reported that "It's not my job," and "What are they going to do, fire me?" were common among frontline staff and even occurred in other departments.

What Do Staff Really Say About Management

Some staff reported that they did not feel valued in their jobs and felt disposable. They reported some managers were over-bearing while others were totally hands off and not all managers were perceived as welcoming, and therefore, concerns and problems go unreported. Many staff voiced that there is an appearance of upper management “never leaving the office.” Some facilities have all department supervisors whose offices are all in the same location, yet they are segregated and shut off from all other non-supervisory employees. When staff never sees a supervisor on the floor, they feel resentful especially if they are short-staffed and feeling overwhelmed.

One staff member stated, “If someone would just help us get water to the residents this morning, it would take so much stress off.”



What Do Staff Really Say About Management

Many employees talked about their “staff lounges.”

When asked how does supervisory staff view the importance of their employees, staff stated “go look at our employee lounge”, that’s the way they view us.

Employees assume if the supervisors don’t care about the condition of the lounge, then they could care less about the employees.

“We have no where to go within the facility to just relax and rest, heat up our food or even be able to store our food in working appliances.”

“Many of the appliances are not working, peeling paint on the walls, missing tiles on the floors, holes in carpeting.” “The sinks are dirty and stained”. “We don’t even get offered free coffee or tea during the day.” “Lots of items that don’t belong in an employee lounge are stored haphazardly, just another storage area.”

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions of the Management Team

Regional and facility supervisory staff, look at your employee lounges.

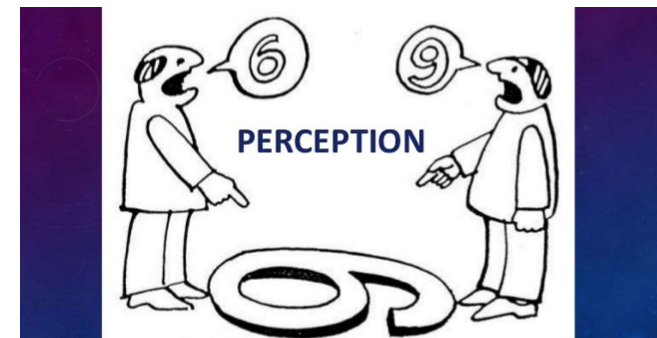
Are the floors and walls in disrepair? Are the appliances in working order? Is the lounge clean and inviting?

This space is where your staff goes to relax and eat, how do you think they feel when they have nowhere inviting to go? Employees tell us that they go to their cars during lunch.

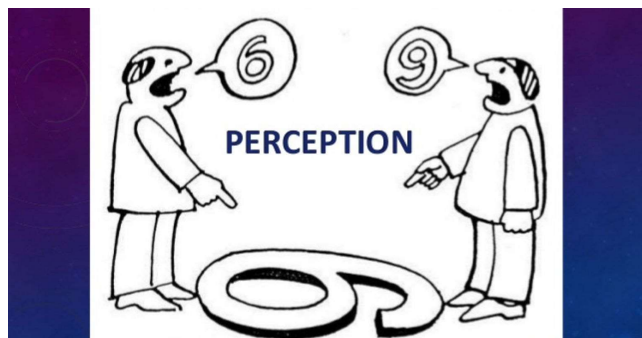
What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions of the Management Team

Make Staff a priority. There are many benefits to having an employee lounge such as:

- These spaces can energize staff (especially those working long hours or on extra shifts)
- Allows employees a quiet, calm place to unwind away from the hectic resident care space. Supervisors can go to their offices, but the rest of the staff can't.
- Keeps staff “refreshed” and gives them one less thing they have to be unhappy about



What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions of the Management Team



Make Staff a priority. There are many benefits to having an employee lounge such as (Continued):

- Gives residents and families a better perception of the facility. They see the facility takes pride in their employees and residents get a more engaged/energetic care team
- Shows employees that their facility, their administration care about them, which can create higher employee engagement and less turnover
- Gives employees an opportunity to come up with ideas on how to improve the aesthetics of their lounge, let residents make art to display in the lounge, a coat of fresh paint goes a long way.

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions of the Management Team



“
Train people well enough
so they can leave, treat
them well enough so
they don't want to.

Richard Branson

#QOTD

Concentrate on improving communication between staff and management. Implement a suggestion box where staff can share their ideas facility-related issues.

Also, remember that all suggestions have value, and while they may not all be practical or able to be implemented, acknowledging the input will ensure that staff feels 'heard' and like an important part of the team. When ideas are acted upon, this motivates/encourages the staff to engage in more dialogue to improve resident care, employee satisfaction, resident satisfaction etc.

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions of the Management Team

Consistency with communication is of utmost importance. Let your staff indicate what information is crucial to them, for example, if clinical staff is identifying they are not getting adequate reported resident information i.e. admissions and discharges, resident profile information etc., then sit down as a team and discuss how the reporting process needs to be changed or improved upon. One of the biggest challenges voiced by CNAs is that clinical staff does not get enough information shift to shift on admissions. They are frustrated when toileting status, mobility status, device usage, diet, co-morbidities etc. are not known and they have to go around asking for relevant information. This admission information is an imperative tool needed for direct care staff to provide basic quality care.

Let your staff come up with ideas and requests, and whenever they report an issue, supervisory staff should then ask them for their resolution to the issue, request or challenge. This allows staff to think outside the box. Remind staff that supervisors don't always have the answers and they need feedback. IF YOU DON'T ASK, THEY WON'T SAY.

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions of the Management Team

Get out on the floor! Make it the job of every manager (Administrator, too) to “round” their department and pitch in where it might be needed. Help staff take water pitchers to the residents—it doesn’t have to be hours or big jobs, but showing staff you see them and understand goes a long way in building trust and mutual respect.

Have supervisors round in other departments. A checklist will help enable them to identify what they need to be looking for and be aware of. A fresh set of eyes is very helpful in identifying opportunities for improvement, through positive feedback, and offers new ways of looking at how one may want to address challenges or barriers. It also can help build rapport between departments and halls.

Rounding should include walking the outside grounds of the facility, as taking pride in how the facility looks on the outside goes a long way to help employees feel pride in their environmental surroundings as well.

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions of the Management Team

Empower your Staff!

Include CNAs and CMAs in care-planning meetings. This is an opportunity for your staff to be “heard,” empowered, and validated in their jobs. Families want to hear what frontline caregivers can tell them about their loved ones regarding medication, bathing, appetite, behavior, mood, etc., and they have a lot to contribute to the conversation of goals, interventions, etc., for the resident. If there have been maintenance or laundry or activity/dietary issues, include staff in these departments who can offer ideas and insight to particular challenges the resident may be having.

Again, let the “source” of information give the information first hand. It absolutely doesn’t always need to be supervisory staff, as on-the-floor and direct care employees have a lot to share.



What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions of the Management Team

Take care of your staff!

Do you meet the basic needs of your employees?

One of the questions asked in interviews is, “Do any of your co-workers go hungry during their shifts?” and many employees in every facility responded, “Yes.”

Many employees stated that they themselves bring food from home to share with others who are hungry. Should we allow this “need” to be put on the shoulders of our employees?

What does your facility practice in regard to ensuring your employees don’t go hungry, that they don’t have to “ask” for a meal?



What Do Staff Really Say About Staff Recognition Programs

REWARD & RECOGNITION

NMHCA/NMCAL identified differing perceptions between management and frontline staff when it came to facility recognition programs.

Frontline staff tend to perceive “Employee of the Month” as a popularity contest and other recognition programs were perceived as being too much trouble to access online.

Frontline staff reported not being aware of recognition programs that were apparently being offered by the facility.

NMHCA/NMCAL identified “feelings of competition” between different departments/wings, units/shifts.

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions on the Staff Recognition Programs

Provide education, training, and promotion around existing recognition programs. Identify and promote any monetary or other incentivized awards that can be implemented moving forward.

- Outline recognition criteria for staff and promote the ‘winners’ using those criteria to help minimize the perception that it is a popularity-based program. (Appendix C)
- Further promote recognized employees through posting, mailings, etc., to ensure that all staff, residents, and families are aware of the recognition in excellence that staff are demonstrating. (You have to pat yourself and your staff on the back!)

Offer paid-time off and cash rewards accumulated with hours worked.

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions on the Staff Recognition Programs

Provide all department supervisors with a way to recognize their staff outside of facility-wide programs. (Coupons for free lunch, gift cards, etc., on any given day.) Instant gratification thank-you items such as candy bars, cans of soda or free lunch tickets, etc., from any supervisor in any department given spontaneously for a job well done or going “above and beyond” can be very motivating. This is especially true when an employee is given recognition by someone from a different department.



Ask your staff what they would deem rewarding in the way of instant gratification tokens. Sometimes what our staff “enjoys” or “likes” is not what supervisors think they like or enjoy.

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions on the Staff Recognition Programs

Why is it that some department heads go out of their way to reward or recognize staff more than others? Create opportunities to learn from those that are getting it right and ask them for feedback on what they are doing that you aren't.

During supervisory meetings, report your staff retention data per department. This is a way of identifying supervisors who may be new to their role, or ones that are having a difficult time with their staff. Pair two supervisors together, one that has higher retention rates and one who's department may be struggling.

Sometimes going out of one's way to encourage and compliment staff is more natural than for others. Take small steps to recognize staff daily, try something new frequently and recognize that each small win can lead to a big win. Keep a journal of what is going well and what isn't, share the information during morning supervisory meetings.

Share
ideas
Start
something
good

What Can Facilities Do to Improve Perceptions on the Facility Culture?

Culture is driven from the top down, and it's only through these top-down changes in both operations and mentality that change will happen

Attention must be paid to recruiting and retaining good employees, hold bad employees accountable

Understand the mental health toll many retained workforce employees have endured since the Pandemic. Offer counseling services (Hospice counselors, free state resources) as PTSD can still be evident with some employees. You can't help them if you don't know what's needed.

Have an employee-first culture in which the facility shows how much employees matter to them and how much they mean to facility so that employees will take care of the residents well.



What Can Facilities Do to Improve the Facility Culture?



Improve Customer Service with both employees and residents!
The definition of excellent customer service is anticipating the needs of the customer before they even ask for something.
Anticipate the needs of your staff!

THE INDUSTRY WON'T GET VERY FAR IN STEMMING STAFFING SHORTAGES IF IT DOESN'T STOP LOSING EXISTING WORKERS. TEMPORARY STAFF AND WAGE INCREASES WILL ONLY GET YOU SO FAR. WE MUST DEVELOP A BUY-IN OF EMPOWERMENT AND CULTURE FOR OUR STAFF. YOU MUST KNOW YOUR EMPLOYEES.

*McKnight's Long-Term Care News; Vol. 44, No. 3 Think Broadly,
Rachael Zimlich, RN, BSN

What Can Facilities Do to Improve the Facility Culture?

What are you as a facility doing for employees to have fun in the workplace?

Implement fun, engaging team-building exercises between units, create some fun competition

Get your FUN employees involved with ideas on how to have fun!!! Have talent shows, have staff lead an activity that they are passionate about on a regular basis. For example, I forgot how much I enjoyed singing hymns during church services with the residents and started going when I could.

Employees need to be given opportunities to remember why they are in a service-oriented job to begin with. They need to remember to have fun with the residents as well as with their co-workers. Employees need to laugh.

[Fish!: A Remarkable way to Boost Morale and Improve Results](#)



4 Questions to Ask Yourself Before Stopping

You have to give ideas time to work before you abandon them. Asking these questions will help you determine if more time is warranted to ensure success or whether it's time to throw in the towel and start over again.

WHY DID I PURSUE THIS IN THE FIRST PLACE?

T

WHY DO I FEEL THE NEED TO DISCONTINUE THE IDEA?

HAVE I DONE EVERYTHING I CAN TO MAKE THIS WORK FOR MY STAFF?

WHAT DO I HAVE TO GAIN BY STOPPING THIS PROGRAM/IDEA?