

## Long-Term Care Survey Alert

### Staff Management: Spot 'Em Before You Got 'Em -- Troublemaking Employees, That Is

#### 3 warning signs you should never ignore during the job interview.

To keep your facility free of bad apples, cull job applicants who don't have what it takes to be team players -- or those who might turn into disgruntled employees with an ax to grind.

"Certain personality types can become loose cannons who will always act in a reactionary mode with the need for instant gratification," says **Loretta LeBar**, an attorney with **Stoll, Keenon & Park LLP** in Lexington, KY. "For example, they could go to the state and file a complaint -- just because it's in their nature to do so."

Others tend to put themselves first in almost every situation -- the "all about me" people who can tank staff cooperation and morale.

Human relations specialists share below some novel techniques to ferret out a potential hire who may not jibe with a caregiving environment:

**1. Count the "I's."** Ask job candidates to describe how they would handle various scenarios involving a resident. For example, what would the job candidate do if she found a resident lying on the floor unconscious? Then count the number of times the person says "I," advises LeBar. "And if it's not 'I' in relationship to the resident's immediate needs or employer policies -- for example, where the person says 'I'd be concerned about how long the resident had been on the floor,'" watch out, says LeBar. "You may have a narcissistic person on your hands," she cautions. "And people with that type of personality demand a lot of attention -- and some may become disgruntled if they don't get what they think they need from managers."

**2. Watch out for "black and white" thinking.** People who hold onto grudges may engage in what's known as "splitting" where they categorize people into the good versus the bad camp, says social worker **Francis Battisti**, a nursing home consultant and co-principal of BattistiNetwork in Binghamton, NY. "So listen for themes where the person talks about how the last administrator was such a good guy but the DON was really bad -- or the facility had three doctors, one of whom was great and the other two terrible."

**Another warning sign:** Watch out for someone who speaks of every place he has ever been as perfect or wonderful, cautions Battisti. Nothing is perfect. And working out problems and meeting challenges requires a person to identify and confront realities and deal with ambiguity.

**3. Gauge how the person responds to authority and handles concerns and complaints.** Ask potential hires how they handled a difficulty with a boss, co-worker, family member or customer, advises **Clint Maun, CSP**, a management consultant in Omaha, NE. "Then be quiet and let the person tell you the story," he advises. "Listen for a tale of compassion and assertiveness versus one that's all about me, me, me," he adds. "If someone says, I couldn't work with her so I told my boss or called the state or whatever, the person is giving you a heads up that's how she's likely to behave in your facility."

**Be careful:** Just because someone has reported a facility to the state doesn't mean the person wasn't being conscientious and doing the right thing in a particular instance, says Battisti. "If a person admits she lodged a complaint, explore that with him or her," he advises, noting that facilities encourage staff to come forward when they see shortfalls in care or potential signs of abuse.

