

MDS Alert

HR and Staffing: Focus on Team Cohesion

Periods of upheaval have a silver lining: increased team solidarity.

With the Patient-Driven Payment Model (PDPM) looming right around the corner, many workers in the long-term care industry are probably wondering how they and their team members will make it through the storm. Instead of worrying about rocking the boat by stressing out over which staff member or department is responsible for which new aspect of documentation, find your PDPM sea legs together.

Use this period of immense change to begin and maintain habits that will better your team's efficiency, as well as increasing reliability and trust.

Facilitate Quality Meetings

With the thought of everyone floundering to stay on top of the new assessment and documentation requirements, scheduling an additional meeting may sound like punishment. But consider how attending a meeting can actually be a boon to productivity and solidarity. Conducting and attending a quality staff meeting can really build team cohesion while getting everyone on the same page for the new requirements for PDPM.

While everyone ostensibly knows what changes each will be responsible for, gathering in one place at the same time - as far as that's possible, in your facility - provides a time and space for people to comment on processes they're currently struggling with, illuminate discrepancies in documentation, or brainstorm on how to make necessary changes together.

Top tip: Consider providing some kind of treat to further incentivize attendance and participation.

Plus, if your facility is experiencing staff turnover, meeting regularly in this period of high stress and immense change can help staff feel more invested, more confident, and more secure. Low-stakes interactions like these can help everyone feel like a team by virtue of simply connecting names with faces (or faces with initials or signatures on documentation). Dedicated meetings like this also provide a chance for NACs to go over the specifics of how they need certain behaviors or skills documented to be able to reflect clinical realities on assessments - and request feedback to see whether team members find instructions clear or whether they require further clarification.

Generally, employees want to see that they as individuals fit into the big picture of a company and how their efforts impact success, says **Sandra Herman**, senior HR consultant at **Human Resource Advisors** in Walnut Creek, California. In periods of change, satisfying this need can be especially important.

Staff on the ground have a much better sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the documentation workflow, for example, than management, and when team members feel like their manager - or assessment coordinator - has their back, they're much more likely to be candid with management on pointing out places where everyone can improve.

Consider 121s

With an increase in coordination duties, NACs may feel like they're spread more thinly than ever. Invest some time with those whose documentation you depend upon most by scheduling regular one-on-one meetings, often called 121s, while PDPM is new to everyone. With regular, focused meetings, your team members can highlight any issues that they're having with documentation or software, figure out whether the schedule for different parts of assessments are happening at the right time, and make sure residents are receiving quality care and that each aspect is documented appropriately.

You can make meetings with your most involved team members as frequently as needed in the first few weeks and then

taper off as you and your staff stakeholders see fit, but an "all hands on deck" approach can help get everyone through the immediate roughness of the transition, especially if everyone can feel connected and empowered throughout any missteps.

Get Creative with Education

Dress up break rooms, hallway bulletin boards, and other available spaces with gentle and fun reminders or educational materials that focus on documentation must-dos or which care items are especially important for accurate assessment and payment. Providing visual cues and visible reminders can help staff with making sure new habits are truly ingrained - as well as serve as a resource if anyone needs to jog her memory.

Do what you can, within your power, to feel confident and secure in your workflow for PDPM because you are going to feel and see the majority of the changes and be the most stressed. Your team members will still be focused on delivery of care or conducting their routine assessments and won't necessarily be focused on how the significance of those efforts changes over night.