

MDS Alert

Management: Interviewing An MDS Nurse Candidate? 3 Strategies Help You Choose The Right Person

Beware: The ideal candidate isn't always who you think it will be.

Hiring an MDS nurse is an expensive proposition that your team shouldn't leave to chance. These approaches can reveal who is most likely to succeed in a demanding job.

1. Find out how the person perceives the job and what she or he expects from it. **Jeanne Gersten Koren, RN**, a corporate nurse for a nonprofit nursing home chain in Wichita, KS, thinks some nurses who are tired of working the floor perceive the MDS nurse position is an office job that won't be stressful.

Reality check: Koren's organization asks nurses applying for the MDS nurse role if they like paper- work, how they deal with stress -- and how they manage working with a diverse team.

Key point: The MDS person has to be "very willing to work with all shifts and all the different disciplines, including direct-care staff," emphasizes **Reta Underwood**, a long-term care consultant in Buckner, KY.

2. Assess the candidate's critical thinking skills. One way to do that is to devise an exercise that requires a person to use critical thinking, says **Marilyn Rantz, PhD, RN, FAAN**, a nursing professor and executive director of Aging in Place at the **University of Missouri-Columbia**.

Example: Give a job applicant a mock sample QI/QM report and resident roster with fake names, Rantz suggests. Then, have the person review a mock-up chart to identify documentation that supports the MDS coding for a specific QI/QM, such as falls or pressure ulcers, she advises. (If the person is already a nurse working with residents in the facility, you can use an actual QI/QM report and chart, Rantz says.)

Also give the person the RAI user's manual and the technical specifications and information on the QIs/QMs, Rantz advises. "Even if the person isn't familiar with the RAI process, he or she should be able to read the materials and definitions and think it through."

3. Try to identify how much "baggage," in terms of misinformation and myths, the person has about the MDS, suggests **Marilyn Mines, RN, RAC-C, BC**, director of clinical services for **FR&R Healthcare Consulting Inc.** in Deerfield, IL. That's important to do, she says, because dissuading a person that his or her coding myths are wrong can be difficult, in Mines' experience.