

MDS Alert

Staffing: Implement These Programs To Boost Employee Retention

Providing pathways for advancement and accountability helps everyone.

Quality and trustworthy staff keep facilities' worlds turning, bettering residents' lives and reducing management's woes. In your capacity as a manager or supervisor, you have the power to help everyone feel like they should stick around - you just need the right policies in place to help staff feel like your facility is the anchor for their careers, not just a place to earn a paycheck. (One can simply earn a paycheck almost anywhere.)

Promote Advancement

Employees, including direct care staff, "need opportunities to learn and grow in their jobs; otherwise, they will start looking elsewhere for new challenges," says PHI, a New York-based organization that aims to boost the delivery of quality care through strategizing with facilities to bolster the quality of the careers they offer.

Offer Specialty Training

By investing in continuing education, you can help your employees feel valued and help your workforce gain more and better specialized skills, to boot. "By offering specialty training and advancement opportunities, you can maximize a worker's contribution, reward their dedication, and improve retention in the long run," PHI says.

Hold dynamic seminars on Alzheimer's disease and dementia care or palliative care or diabetes care, etc. - anything that boosts employees' skills for care that your residents need and helps them feel like provide an integral knowledge base to your organization.

Help Employees Understand Their Voices Count

Take the concept of the interdisciplinary team (IDT) in a different direction and utilize the opportunity of employees of varying roles and qualifications to work together. This integrates direct-care workers in the decisions and workflow that anchors their shifts. PHI describes such an organization as a "cross-functional team," saying, "A cross-functional team is a group of employees representing different roles and departments across the organization who work together to identify challenges and generate solutions and action plans. Cross-functional teams handle topics such as: scheduling, assignments, and workload balancing; quality improvement; care planning; and employee retention."

Reward Great Work

You can incentivize employees by recognizing their efforts and successes.

Top tip: Know your employees well enough to know how they'd prefer to be recognized. For example, an introvert may appreciate a one-on-one heartfelt thank you more than being paraded out in front of everyone at a staff meeting.

One of the biggest and most important ways of retaining a happy and productive workforce is paying a living wage and providing comprehensive benefits, PHI says. Investing in your workers means investing in the future and well-being of your facility, community, and your local community. But even if you can't raise wages at this moment, there are other means of showing staff that you appreciate their work.

Acknowledge specifics. A blanket statement like "Great work!" won't hit home in the same way as recognizing your employee for handling the situation with Mr. Johnson at bedtime. Even if you're acknowledging work that is "expected" of an employee in a particular role, reinforcing your appreciation reinforces her confidence in her skill and her trust in your supervision.

Nurturing a culture of observation and appreciation helps boost cohesion and performance. "Don't reward workers from the top down only. Peer recognition programs, whether facilitated online or on a bulletin board, allow anyone in the organization to recognize anyone else in a social, democratic way," PHI says.

Seek Feedback on Progress

Opening the door to conversation with staff helps them know that they're heard - in triumphs and when confronting challenges - and also provides invaluable feedback on the "health" of your workforce satisfaction and relationships. (See box for question examples.)

Ask staff these questions from **PHI**, a New York-based organization promoting high-quality care through high-quality jobs, during your next round of individual meetings. These questions are useful and meaningful for employees at every level of your facility's organization. Besides providing management or human resources with data, "directly interviewing or surveying staff helps them feel more valued and engaged in the organization, which is also a retention strategy," PHI says.

- What do you like most about your work?
- What do you like most about this agency/workplace?
- What is particularly challenging about your work?
- What is challenging about working in this agency/workplace?
- How prepared were you to start this job?
- What would have helped you feel more prepared?
- How would you describe an ideal candidate for this job?
- What qualifications or experience do you think all new caregivers need?
- How well do you think our current recruitment materials reflect the reality of this job?
- What would you say to a potential job candidate about this job or agency/ workplace?