

## OASIS Alert

### OBQI: Keeping Employees Focused Improves Agency Outcomes

**Treating all employees the same may be sabotaging your results.**

If you want better outcomes, improved profitability, happier employees and loyal clients - brush up on your coaching strategies.

How well you and your staff understand your agency's vision influences your success in the new outcomes-driven world of home care, according to **Bonnie Westra** with CareFacts **Information Systems** in St. Paul, MN. Communicating this vision, engaging your staff and making sure they are moving in the same direction will improve both clinical and financial outcomes, she told attendees at an educational session of the October annual meeting of the **National Association for Home Care & Hospice** in Phoenix.

It's essential to make your expectations very clear and then provide frequent feedback and reinforcement as your team works toward your outcome goals, Westra advises. Keep in mind that newer staff members may not have a clear understanding of where your agency is trying to go, she adds.

**Do this:** Using a simple form the employee completes, you can spend 10 minutes a month reviewing with each one where she is in her progress toward the goal for the month and what she plans to work on next month. This time is well spent, Westra argues, because it keeps the employee focused and moving forward.

To achieve the best outcomes, find ways to attract, focus and keep the best employees, explained co-presenter **Karen Marek**, who works with both the **Visiting Nurse Association of Wisconsin** and the **University of Wisconsin** in Milwaukee. To succeed, many agencies must approach staffing issues differently than they have in the past, she says.

**Key:** Recognize that people have intrinsic talents and weaknesses. Hire people for their talents, Marek warns. Don't plan to correct their weaknesses. Agencies have found many acute care nurses work well in a hospital setting, but may not have the ability or discipline to be successful in the home care setting, she says.

Look for staff with the right talent mix, she explains, and then plan the workload to make the most of these talents. For example, some people are very systematic and detail-oriented, while others are better at seeing the big picture or at problem-solving.

**Tip:** When you can, pair people with complementary talents, Marek advises.

A few more of the many suggestions Westra and Marek offered:

1. **Capitalize on employee strengths.** Instead of focusing on poor performers, concentrate some of your efforts on those who are doing a good job - and reward them.
2. **Don't treat everyone the same.** Treat everyone fairly, but maximize your employees' contributions by giving them attention and leadership specific to their needs.
3. **Think positive.** Make a list of your favorite positive words and phrases and use them often to increase staff energy and

motivation - and your own.

Editor's Note: To order a tape of "Coach-ing Strategies for Successful Outcomes," go to [www.nahc.org](http://www.nahc.org) and click on "conference."