

4 BOOKLET

LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY WORKER RETENTION

— The Learning Series will —
**OPEN YOUR MIND
TO CONCEPTS,
POSSIBILITIES
And
CREATIVE THINKING**

The Learning Series

The Learning Series has been developed as a series of tactical information booklets to help long-term care facility operators and administrators with a variety of marketing, recruitment and retention needs. The Learning Series is a generic guide to assist facility operators and administrators who are:

- New or looking to augment their Human Resources (HR) marketing knowledge
- Looking for new and unique ways to market to consumers and recruit and retain quality candidates to their facility

Each of the booklets in the learning series contains tools, suggestions and practical solutions for various recruitment and retention challenges.

Booklet One HR Recruitment & Consumer Marketing Tools & Tactics

Booklet one focuses on tactics that can be applied to recruitment marketing of most staff positions in the long-term care facility sector. The booklet starts with a detailed step-by-step outline of how to develop a marketing plan which can help focus marketing activities. After marketing needs are determined, tactics can be identified; booklet one concentrates on how to market long-term care facilities through traditional advertising tactics such as job fairs, the Internet and local communities.

Booklet Two Building a Web Site from A to Z

Booklet two reviews all of the steps that are involved in building a simple web site. An introduction to the Internet, an outline of the elements that make up a web page and the approximate costs for a web site are provided. The main chapters review the steps to building a site from designing the layout, writing the content, building the web pages and finally launching and maintaining the site.

Booklet Three Targeted Recruiting by Long-Term Care Facilities

The third booklet in the learning series focuses on Targeted Recruiting. The booklet provides tips and strategies on how to target professionals for recruitment to rural communities, how to target graduating students for recruitment and how to tap into untapped labour pools such as mature workers, and workers who are new to Ontario.

Booklet Four Long-Term Care Facility Worker Retention

Keeping and developing quality employees is crucial to the continued existence of long-term care facilities. Booklet four focuses on best practices and employee retention strategies to assist facility operators in retaining and empowering current and future staff.

Why the need to provide a resource kit for long-term care facility operators?

The long-term care facility sector in Ontario is undergoing a significant transformation. Government investments have resulted in the addition of 20,000 new beds by the end of 2004 and the redevelopment of up to 16,000 existing beds by 2006. As a result, many new facilities will be opening and a large number of employment opportunities will be created.

There is a shortage of qualified staff in many areas of health care across the country, as well as around the world, which creates recruitment challenges for health care providers. Investment into the future of health care for seniors will create new challenges for recruitment in the long-term care facility sector. To be effective the sector must respond by ensuring that all recruitment and retention opportunities are pursued, alliances are built with educational institutions and people who may consider a career in long-term care are drawn to the sector.

As a facility operator you will need to ensure that your tactics reflect the most up-to-date and successful recruitment practices, and provide the best opportunity to find the right staff to meet the needs of your residents.

Contributors

This resource kit has been prepared as a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors (OANHSS), the Ontario Long-Term Care Association (OLTCA) and long-term care facility operators.

Disclaimer

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4 BOOKLET

Long-Term Care Facility Worker Retention

Long-Term Care Facility Worker Retention

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1.0 SECTION

Employee Retention: Assessing if Your Facility Has Staffing Challenges

Employee Retention: Assessing If Your Facility Has Staffing Challenges

Employee retention and all of the elements associated with job satisfaction should become your primary human resources focus once you have finished your recruitment efforts. The reality is, however, that recruitment and retention challenges tend to be ongoing. Facilities that attract highly skilled and experienced staff tend to be the favourite targets of competitors. Unless your employees are fully satisfied, your facility is at risk of losing staff to the increasing number of opportunities available in the long-term care facility sector. Therefore, the more strategic planning you do in advance, the better prepared you and your facility can be. The more your retention strategy is well thought out and personalized to your unique situation and to your competitive environment, the more successful it will be.

For most facility operators or administrators, it is often a challenge to find the time to review larger issues such as employee retention. However, if you take the time to determine the extent of your facility's retention challenges, the results may provide you with valuable information to assess if your strategic interventions are actually making a difference. At the same time, the results will help to point the way to best focus your retention efforts.

1.1 Turnover- What Is It?

Turnover refers to the number of staff who leave your facility for any reason; retention is keeping valued employees. One of the first steps you can take towards understanding your facility's retention challenges is to review employee turnover. Even facilities with traditionally low turnover, expect and actually count on, a certain amount of employee turnover. For example, one benefit of low turnover is that new employees can bring fresh ideas, energy and optimism that can be contagious to your long-time staff. However, at a certain point turnover may not be advantageous to your facility; turnover is expensive, in time and in dollars and in pressure on your facility as a whole. Furthermore, the reputation of your facility as a desired employer may be damaged if staff are known to leave soon after orientation. As such, you need to take into consideration how turnover is affecting the functioning of your facility.

TIP: Turnover itself is only "positive" or "negative" depending on volume and type:

- Positive turnover is the result of strong employees being promoted and weak employees leaving.
- Negative turnover is the result of qualified employees leaving for better opportunities at other facilities.

Successful retention programs minimize or eliminate negative turnover while maintaining opportunities for positive turnover.

1.1.1 Calculating Turnover

To understand how turnover might be affecting your facility you should first create a "baseline". If possible, see if you can compare your facility's staff turnover to other facilities that are similar in size, region, etc. If you do not have another facility to compare to, think about comparing one unit to another within your facility. This may help to illustrate the turnover of one type of position as compared to another. In either case, the baseline will represent typical turnover during a pre-determined period of time. Once you have a baseline, you can then compare your turnover results and see how your facility is doing.

How to Calculate Turnover Percentage:

Sum of terminations in one year / the sum of established positions X 100

e.g., $8/25 \times 100 = 32\%$ staff turnover

"Terminations" in this definition includes all reasons for leaving the facility: resignation, retirement, firing, etc. This percentage should be calculated for each position and could also be grouped per unit, as well as, a general number for your whole facility.

Once you have calculated turnover for each position in your facility, take a moment to see if there are problem areas and where they are. Is there a large difference between units? Is one position much more affected than others? For example, on one unit do you have several stable long-term staff but one particular position that keeps turning over? Are there other issues affecting staff and stability in your facility?

By asking these types of questions you can begin to identify issues and challenges that a retention strategy may address. Understanding where the problems are will ultimately help you to find solutions.

TIP: As a comparison, in the United States nursing home sector, turnover is considered to be high and "in crisis". The following turnover statistics are available on annual average turnover in 2002:
Certified Nursing Assistants = 71%
Staff Registered Nurses = 48.9%
Licensed Practical Nurses = 48.9%

A NOTE ON TURNOVER: 100 percent turnover does not necessarily mean that every single employee departs a facility in the course of one year. It may mean that for every employee who stays the full year, for example, two or more came and one left a similar job at the same facility.

Assessing If Your Facility Has Staffing Challenges.

1.1.2 The Cost of Turnover

Staff turnover can affect costs both directly and indirectly:

- Direct costs, for example, on advertising to recruit new staff.
- Management time spent on recruitment efforts as well as on orientation and staff support for the new employee.
- Lower productivity by a new employee while he or she adapts to the new job setting and by supervisors and others who are involved in the training.
- Loss of capacity while the vacancy remains unfilled and other staff try to fill some of the void.

The average cost of turnover varies according to local conditions which affect the pool of potential employees such as unemployment rates. The more difficult and longer it takes to recruit and train new employees, the more expensive it will be. Most American sources estimate that the total cost of recruiting and training new long-term care facility employees is 1.5 times the salary for that position; however, Canadian employers tend to estimate a much smaller average of 10%-15% of wages. You may want to consider adding up all of the costs for an actual vacancy at your facility to determine a benchmark to use. Once you have an estimate of what turnover is really costing your facility, you will be able to determine an appropriate investment in implementing a retention strategy using the tactics discussed here or others that you develop.

Appendix A offers a sample format to assist you to estimate potential return on investment in developing a strategy to improve retention and reduce negative turnover in your facility.

1.2 Knowing your Staff

Another factor to consider when you are reviewing retention at your facility is to look at how many of your employees right now are at a high risk of leaving. Staff may be looking to leave for new opportunities, an inability of the facility to adequately meet their needs or for a variety of personal reasons.

Some early warning signs of potential staff turnover may be:

- Life Events – such as a death in the family, divorce, turning 40 or 50, achieving additional education/training, moving farther away
- Increased unexplained use of sick days
- A mentor/friend/supervisor leaves
- Reduced interest in volunteering for projects or overtime
- Rejection for a job change or promotion
- Increased complaints
- Change in job performance
- Visibly unhappy

If you find that you are unable to answer this portion of your retention assessment because you do not know enough about what is going on with your employees at the current time, this will likely suggest the need for you to gather personalized information as part of the creation of your retention strategy. You may want to speak with direct supervisors as they are an important resource for identifying valuable staff at high-risk of leaving. You may also choose to conduct a staff survey which can provide you with a better understanding of how your staff are feeling about their work, supervisors and their environment.

1.3 Other Sources of Information

In addition to looking at turnover and at individual employee's risk of leaving, you may find that you have other information that will tell you if you have a problem with retention. As an example, staff surveys, complaints review, exit interviews and other sources of staff or resident/family feedback should be looked at in your assessment.

This information may quickly underscore for you the impact of high turnover on all staff, including those remaining, and provide very honest information from employees who are leaving about what would have encouraged them to stay. Without this information, it is very difficult to identify specific retention activities that may work for your unique situation.

TIP: If you do not have a system for surveying staff, or perhaps you do not have a good exit survey, please look at section 2.5 in this booklet for ideas on how to gather information from your staff.

2.0 **SECTION**

Addressing Employee Retention Problems

Addressing Employee Retention Problems

2.0 Introduction

Once you have calculated and analyzed your turnover rate and you have reviewed your current risk of losing staff, developing an actual retention strategy should be your next step. The information you have gathered up to this point may or may not reveal key areas for action. Whether you have clearly identifiable challenges or you are still trying to focus your facility's retention challenge(s), your facility will need to develop an individualized plan to address potential losses of highest risk positions and people within your unique environment.

The following ideas reflect issues common to most settings; however, no single intervention will work for everyone. The ideas presented here are possible options for you to consider. These options are not necessarily the only solutions available and should be tailored to address your facility's present issues and reflect the resources and options available to you and your staff.

2.1 Employee Orientation: you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

An excellent orientation to your facility is indispensable to getting new employees off on the right foot. The first days and weeks of employment are an opportunity to communicate important information about your facility beyond the policies and procedures such as the core values and your facility's culture of the organization. Educating new staff from the beginning about your facility's unique features that support a healthy and stimulating workplace instills pride and confidence in the new hire's choice to work at your facility.

i. Orientation

The following checklist provides an overview of important topics to consider during your orientation process. In addition to core orientation topics such as policies and procedures of your facility the orientation process should also respond to the learning needs of new staff. A typical orientation should include a facility tour, introductions to colleagues and a set time to ask questions. Before a new employee starts, you should make sure that all relevant staff are aware that the new employee is starting (date and time) and that the unit is prepared to train and welcome them.

TIP: Consider sending an orientation/information package to the new employee before they start working - along with a personalized note and who their contact will be on the first day - so that he or she feels welcomed and looks forward to their first day on the job.

Sample Value Added Contents for Orientation Packages:

- Organization's mission statement, vision and values
- Annual reports and business or strategic plans
- Background on the organization such as newsletters or press clippings
- Professional development opportunities and resources
- Staff lists, facility layout
- Resident or unit profiles including staffing levels
- Equipment available
- Summaries of relevant legislation and regulations
- Frequently asked questions

ii. Integration

Integration refers to the process of a new employee identifying with and becoming part your facility community and the local community. Employees who are strongly connected to the workplace emotionally and socially are less likely to want to leave. Therefore, fostering positive work relationships and a sense of belonging are key to retaining staff. There are a number of ways you can encourage strong links among your employees. Here are some possibilities:

- Introduce new employees to the whole facility, not just their work area
- Explain how their work area relates to other areas
- Plan staff social events or promote staff initiated social events
- Encourage and support staff participation in community events
- Support employee clubs or recreational teams
- Introduce new employees to local community amenities such as shops, schools, recreational facilities and places of worship including transportation services
- Help organize car pools and shared child and/or elder care arrangements
- Encourage and promote various cultural events important to your staff

It may be helpful to review your facility's current staff social activities to see how they are being received by your staff. Expanding or promoting existing successes is a great place to start. Be creative and get your staff involved in the creation of links to the community and/or throughout your facility. Any activity or feature that creates positive feelings, involvement and a sense of belonging will encourage your employees to want to stay.

Addressing Employee Retention Problems

2.2 Creating Great Places to Work: never underestimate the human touch.

Organizations with a philosophy of shared decision making, individual control over work and a foundation of mutual respect and trust, offer employees positive employment relationships that act as a powerful retention tool. Research conducted on developing positive employee relationships has found that there are four dimensions necessary to create a positive environment, that is, an environment where employees enjoy working and choose to stay. The four dimensions are: trust, commitment, communication and influence . The challenge for health care workplaces is, however, that staff tend to have low levels of all the dimensions necessary to make a positive work environment.

Positive employment relationships are composed of four underlying dimensions	Compared to other occupations, health professionals have:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust → • Commitment → • Communication → • Influence → 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowest level of trust in their employer • Lowest level of commitment to their employer • Lowest ratings of workplace communications • Least influence on workplace decisions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Least supportive and healthy workplaces.

If your facility is operating well and your residents are being cared for, why should you care about the quality of employee relationships as long as the job gets done? The answer is simple, low quality facility work environments have consequences for employees, the organization as a whole and the residents. It may not appear immediately, but studies have found that once the organizational environment begins to decay, all aspects of the organization, including resident care, can begin to deteriorate.

The following is an example of how challenging work environments affect employees and the organization :

For employees, low-quality health care work environments contribute to:	For the organization and its clients, low-quality health care work environments contribute to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal tensions • Reduced job satisfaction • Work-family conflict • Occupational injuries • Reduced physical and mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced job performance • Increased absenteeism • Turnover • Reduced commitment and trust • Demoralized work climate • Reduced quality of patient care

Lowe G, Schellenberg G (2001). What's a good job? The importance of employee relationships. Canadian policy research networks. www.cprn.org

Creating a healthy and supportive work environment is not just a beneficial retention tool, but can also provide your facility with a competitive advantage. Given the limited ability for many facilities to offer large extrinsic rewards, in the form of high salaries and permanent full time jobs, creating an environment where people enjoy working and their passion for their work shows, will be very enticing to many potential employees. Remember word of mouth communications – people often talk about how great facilities are to work at. They tell their friends, family and so on.

There are specific methods of creating positive work places which have proven to be successful. These methods include: increasing supportive management behaviours, explicitly recognizing good performance and fostering a sense of meaning and belonging. Each method is discussed in detail below.

2.2.1 Supportive Management Practices

Supervisors are the human link between your facility's stated goals and expectations and their application in practice. Supervisors support the balancing of competing demands both inside and outside the work environment and are critical for creating a positive environment for staff. Employees who work for supportive supervisors who trust and respect their employees and who base their decisions on circumstances rather than "by the book", report reduced job strain, less stress, greater productivity and reduced turnover when compared to employees who work for managers who deny their employees any sort of flexibility (even when such arrangements are technically available) . Employees who are very dissatisfied with their direct supervisors will consider any opportunity for new employment, while those who are satisfied will remain on the job even in the face of other challenges. The supervisor is so essential to retention that it can be said that employees leave bosses, not jobs.

Canadian research has identified the behaviours that employees associate with a supportive versus non-supportive supervisor. The research found that, for example, employees with supportive managers are more likely to:

- have high job satisfaction,
- high organizational commitment,
- lower levels of job stress and life stress,
- feel secure in their job,
- trust their manager, and
- engage in upward feedback.

Lowe G, Schellenberg G (2001). What's a good job? The importance of employee relationships. Canadian policy research networks. www.cprn.org

Health care advisory board (2000). Reversing the flight of talent: nursing retention in an era of gathering shortage. The advisory board company: Washington, D.C.

Laschinger HKS, Wong C, Mc Mahon L & Kaufmann C (1999). Leader behaviour impact on staff nurse empowerment, job tension and work effectiveness. *Journal of nursing administration*, 29(5), 28-39.

Duxbury L, Higgins C (1997). Supportive Managers: What are they? Why do they matter? *The HRM Research Quarterly: Research for Canadian HR Professionals*, 1 (4). Winter 1997.

Addressing Employee Retention Problems

Below are the kinds of behaviours identified in the same research of over 15,000 employees that reviewed supportive and non-supportive management practices:

A supportive manager is one who:

1. Engages in two-way communication with their subordinates (i.e., shares information, asks their employee's opinions, has frequent face-to-face meetings, gives regular feedback);
2. Provides positive feedback (i.e., gives recognition when a job is well done, expresses confidence in employees' ability to do a difficult job well, gives feedback on a regular basis);
3. Mentors their employees (i.e., utilizes employees' abilities, supports employee to higher-ups, encourages independent work, helps employees learn from their mistakes);
4. Allows their employees autonomy (i.e., encourages employees to make decisions on their own, lets employees do the work from start to finish);
5. Recognizes that their employees have a life outside work (i.e., makes it easy for employee to rearrange their work schedule, allows employee to take advantage of flexible work arrangements); and
6. Facilitates the completion of job tasks (i.e., makes sure that employees have the tools/equipment/training that they need to do their job, encourages employees to take training that is needed to do their job, is available to answer questions).

A non-supportive manager is someone who:

1. Is a poor interpersonal communicator (i.e., only talks to employees when they make a mistake, tells employees what they did wrong rather than what they did right);
2. Does not show respect for employees (i.e., treats employees as if their job is lower in status than it really is, treats managers differently from non-managers, vents frustration on employees in times of crisis, interrupts employees when they are speaking, criticizes employees in front of others);
3. Does not give employee autonomy (i.e., constantly checks employees work);
4. Focuses on hours of work rather than output (i.e., has unrealistic expectations about how much can be done in a given day, makes employees feel guilty about sick days and time off for family reasons, makes negative comments regarding "priorities" when the employee has to rearrange their schedule);
5. Behaves inconsistently (i.e., displays favouritism in assigning work tasks and recommendations for promotion, offers employees support in private then disowns them in public, tells employees what they want to hear and then behaves differently).

While these themes appear in all organizations, the relative importance of the theme depends on the organizational culture, the gender of the employee and the type of job performed. For example, a study of female nurses found that desired support in the workplace consisted of tangible cognitive support from supervisors that facilitates clinical decisions, more recognition and appraisal from supervisors and the opportunity to discuss tensions at work .

While the supervisor-employee relationship is the foundation of supportive management practices, the organization as a whole supports employees by developing systems to recognize a job well done by individuals and teams. Recognition can be both extrinsic and intrinsic. Below you will find some ideas for providing both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to your employees.

2.2.2 Recognizing Employees - Extrinsic Rewards

Your employees need to know that their work is noticed, that it is important and that it makes a difference to the organization. As you begin developing your retention strategy, think about your employees and what might be meaningful to them. A great place to start this process is to ask a few close colleagues their thoughts on various employees and what rewards might be meaningful to them. You may even choose to conduct a one-on-one interview and ask each employee what is personally meaningful to them and how they would like to be thanked or rewarded.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Ask. Include questions in your initial staff survey about how your employees would like to be thanked or rewarded.
- Keep it individualized. What is meaningful for one employee may not be for another.
- Consider culture. What may feel like an honour to you may not be in another culture (or worse, it may be an insult or embarrassing). Be sensitive to public versus private recognition and issues such as age, rank and status.
- Make it timely. Reinforce cause and effect by rewarding the desired performance as soon as possible.
- Make it fun. Some employers have mascots or banners that move around to the next person or place of honour.
- It may cost money. Gift certificates, small or large bonuses, donations to favourite charities, are investments you make in worker morale and performance.
- It may be free. A simple thank you note goes a long way. More freedom, more trust, more responsibility or a new work challenge can be a real and valued reward for doing a great job.

Addressing Employee Retention Problems

Here are some ideas of benefits and rewards that have worked well in non-facility environments which you may be able to adopt in your facility:

- anniversary cakes with a \$100 coupon for every year worked
- counselling services (personal, legal, financial, immigration, employment, alcohol and drug)
- discounts on corporate products or services
- a \$50 coupon for cost saving suggestions
- financial planning services
- free or subsidized food or beverages
- free or subsidized parking
- on-site child care or childcare information and referral services
- on-site wellness programs (e.g., massage therapy, weight loss, smoking cessation)
- personal leave days
- planting a tree on the property for each new employee
- family illness days (child, parent)
- staff lotteries (e.g., perfect attendance earns you a ticket)
- team gift certificates to go shopping for decorations or amenities for the unit

2.2.3 Creating a Sense of Meaning and Belonging - Intrinsic Rewards

A common theme in long-term care is that people are drawn to the work because of a good match with their personal values. Research demonstrates that despite dissatisfaction with a number of employment areas in long-term care, employees find comfort in knowing they are giving of themselves to others. Employees in facilities report that they are attracted and rewarded most of all by caring for the residents and the gratification they receive from residents and are most dissatisfied when tasks and time constraints prevent the opportunity to relate to residents .

Below are some creative practices used by some Ontario facilities and other employers in rewarding their employees:

- "Providing an inviting and refreshing staff break room with some basic amenities coffee/tea and a bottled water system."
- "Creating a fun environment, by providing employees opportunities for participation in theme days."
- "Our company gave each of our facilities \$1,000.00 to use however they wanted towards retention and incentives. We chose to gather the names of all staff that worked on a weekend and put their name in a hat to be eligible to win a \$50.00 gift certificate. On each long weekend of the summer the prizes ranged from a patio set to a barbeque. This went over really well with staff."
- "A lot of our people have 'issues'. If they're preoccupied with stuff at home, they can't do good work here. They may not even be able to get to work. We bring in social workers two days a week to help out workers with personal or legal issues, paperwork, whatever they need."
- "We pay bonuses for certain hard-to-fill positions such as registered nurses coming to work in rural areas...flat amounts paid to the person: half paid after the first 950 hours and the other after a further 950 hours. We pay relocation expenses with proof of receipt where applicable and depending on where the relocation is from. We offer complimentary rent for three months, if available."

Moyle W, Skinner J, Rowe G, Gork C (2003). Views of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in Australian long term care. *Journal of clinical nursing*, 12(2). 168-76.

2.3 Work Organizational Factors

It is highly challenging to organize a satisfying work environment in long-term care facilities. It is easy to become immersed in what care is being provided for residents and not take a step back to examine how the care delivery system is being organized. There are a number of work organization factors that can positively or negatively contribute to employee satisfaction. These include:

- teams,
- work flow,
- workload and workload measurement,
- availability of materials and equipment, and
- administrative responsibilities.

For facility staff, work satisfaction is often summed up as "being able to do my job well". For example, when supplies are not available or the clinical leader does not listen to the advice of a team member, staff can feel frustrated and may look for another employment opportunity where they will feel adequately resourced and respected in doing their work.

Employees in long-term care facilities consistently report that specific work organization factors negatively impact their work satisfaction. Some of these include:

- limited staff involvement in management decision making,
- limited respect or professional roles and related expertise,
- unclear definitions of roles and responsibilities across clinical and administrative staff,
- unreasonable workloads with increasing and changing demands of residents and families, and
- limited access to technology and innovation.

Acquiring state-of-the-art supplies and equipment may be financially prohibitive; however, there are free or low cost changes which can be made to improve how the work is organized. The following are some low cost initiatives for consideration.

i. Ensuring Employee Involvement

Successful efforts to address work organization factors are based on a partnership approach between staff and management. Unit staff are in the best position to identify redundancies, missed steps and wasted efforts in day-to-day work design, as well as generating solutions to the identified problems. Management is able to put resources towards the solutions generated. Some typical methods for bringing staff and management together to work on issues include:

- forming joint committees
- regular forums or meetings where staff can share their views
- rewards programs for cost saving ideas

TIP: Recruiting new employees who are motivated by compassion may be your best retention tool for your most dedicated staff!

Addressing Employee Retention Problems

ii. Inclusive and Professional Teams

Throughout all industry sectors it remains true that who you work with can be just as important as the type of work you are doing or the job itself. Work colleagues and strong teams can make a large difference to job satisfaction.

In the long-term care facility sector, two areas of dissatisfaction appear to repeatedly arise. These are:

- lack of involvement in care planning, and
- working alongside individuals that are perceived as unsuitable for the work due to impatience with or intolerance of resident behaviours.

Involving support staff in care planning may provide a greater sense of responsibility and authority over resident care. Workers who are able to observe a direct link between the information they provide about residents and the subsequent tasks undertaken, have a significantly lower turnover rate than those working in facilities without an inclusive approach. The more people feel that their work and their opinions are being considered the better they tend to feel about their overall position in the facility.

iii. Workload and Workload Measurement

Many work environments today are characterized by a process known as "work intensification". Work intensification often refers to working long or non-standard work hours, inflexible schedules, rising workloads and increasing performance expectations (110% effort) . In work environments where work intensification is part of the culture, some employees can feel pressured, rushed and exhausted. In this situation, employees are often less satisfied and less committed to remaining with their employer. Work load pressures are not only relegated to the physical workplace. Pressure may also be the result of family conflicts or other external pressures that can threaten organizational stability; this can present itself in the form of increased absenteeism, low morale, low productivity and high turnover.

Work process and work flow refers to the integration of tasks, processes, materials and equipment required to accomplish a goal. Often, the process of redesigning work flow can be as basic as moving supplies to a more accessible area or as complex as reorganizing roles and positions. Conducting staff surveys can provide an excellent opportunity to elicit information about work organization factors that visibly and significantly impair job satisfaction. Designing jobs that maximize employee skill, responsibility, autonomy and participation is a key lever in retaining employees.

Some simple ways management and staff can work together to improve work processes and work flow include:

- Jointly identify all the steps necessary for completing a routine task such as processing an admission or giving a bath. Are there any steps that can be combined or eliminated? Is the task being completed by the right person/role?
- Walk through all the steps necessary for completing the task on the unit. Do you have to go back and forth to retrieve supplies? Can the task be completed on all shifts?

Moyle W, Skinner J, Rowe G, Gork C (2003). Views of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in Australian long term care. *Journal of clinical nursing*, 12(2). 168-76.

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iv. Ensuring Employees Have the Materials and Equipment They Need

Long-term care facility staff repeatedly emphasize that having the capacity to do their job to the best of their abilities is a critical factor in job satisfaction and retention. Offering employees the opportunity to do their best work includes providing the materials and equipment that they need in order to work correctly. These are trade-offs each facility must consider: saving costs on supplies or equipment, and providing a satisfying work environment. By using the turnover cost calculator in Appendix A, you can identify resources which may be reallocated to supplies and equipment from the savings produced by improving staff retention.

TIP: Establish quick ordering and emergency back up systems for supplies and ensure that adequate supplies such as linens and hygiene items are available for all shifts (nights, weekends).

2.4 Education and Training - learning and growing to improve satisfaction.

Skilled and knowledgeable employees are your greatest asset, but training and retraining employees can be a challenge; training costs money, staff time, workload shifts, etc. There is a common misconception among some health care professionals that long-term care does not require as many skills or as much knowledge as acute care. However, once working in a long-term care facility, many sceptics quickly realize that the work is complex and requires specialized skills and knowledge.

Similar to many sectors across the province, the long-term care facility sector has experienced cost reduction pressures that have resulted in the elimination of training budgets. Conversely, long-term care facility staff find themselves confronted with increasing acuity, changing systems and procedures. As a result, they sometimes lack the knowledge, experience and skills to do what is expected of them. Confronted by these challenges and without the ability to access the appropriate resources, employee frustration can grow quickly. Simultaneously, long-term care workers recognize that their career depends on their ability to maintain and develop critical skills, technological expertise and knowledge. Therefore, they seek employers who will provide this for them or else they move on.

So how do facilities with minimal training budgets find ways to develop staff, improve productivity and offer a rewarding career? Sometimes, creative and practical on-the-job training and development solutions are required to meet these needs. The following are some ideas to assist you.

Addressing Employee Retention Problems

i. Professional Development Planning

A new employee, a promotion, a transfer, performance management and new services, technologies and standards all create a need for professional development planning. While organizational training is required when a change is being introduced, it is important to recognize that individual professional development is a continuous process.

Professional development becomes a retention tactic for your facility when it moves beyond meeting the basic training elements of the position towards responding to the needs, motivations and aspirations of individual facility staff. Every employee has a personal story of how they came to work in long-term care, the experiences and skills they bring to the work, and the direction they hope to grow in the future. Responding to the gaps between current skill sets and future plans, whether a technical expertise or interpersonal skill, can and will produce loyal and motivated employees.

The following outlines a planned approach to training. A planned approach ensures a comprehensive training process that reflects the needs of the employee and the organization. Planning typically includes the following phases:

1. Assess the facility's needs and identify training goals which, when reached, will provide employees with the knowledge and skills to meet the facility's needs. Usually this would also include identifying who should attend the training.
2. Design a training system that employees and trainers can implement to meet the learning goals, including objectives, necessary resources, training content, and timelines for delivery.
3. Develop a training package of resources and materials.
4. Implement the training package including delivering the training and communicating the need for training.
5. Evaluate the training, including before, during and after implementation.
6. Re-assess the facility's needs and goals using the evaluation feedback and begin again.

ii. Career Ladders

Career ladders are traditionally used to reward and recognize clinical practice and leadership. Some career ladder programs provide opportunities for clinicians to proceed through educational programs such as from diploma to baccalaureate. Other programs focus on taking on committee and project responsibilities within the workplace. Many programs include increased salary and responsibilities as the employee progresses.

TIP: Professional associations such as the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario provide resources and assistance for workplaces interested in developing career ladder programs. Visit: <http://www.rnao.org>

Tight budgets call for innovative training ideas that produce effective results and make the best use of limited time and resources. While not intended to replace formal learning such as classroom or distance education, at-work opportunities provide concrete options for the development of practical skills, life skills, and interpersonal skills.

Practical skills – the training that occurs most frequently for occasions such as new, transferred or promoted employees or when new systems are being implemented. Practical skills training may include job specific competency skills and new product or service knowledge and safety issues.

Life skills – these skills include problem-solving, critical thinking, self-esteem, stress management, and time management. Training in these skill areas has been found to be particularly important in retaining young (or new to the workforce) and non-professional staff.

Interpersonal skills – these skills take time to learn and incorporate into every day behaviours. Skills include effective communication with peer-to-peer and subordinate to supervisor, conflict management, team dynamics and listening skills.

2.5 Staff Surveys & Interviews: gathering good information

Understanding why employees remain at your facility, as well as why employees choose to leave, can provide you with invaluable insights and assist you with the creation of your facility's retention strategy. One of the best and most expeditious ways of understanding how your staff are feeling is to create surveys and/or exit interviews.

i. Staff Satisfaction Surveys

Do not assume anything when making decisions about what your facility needs to do to keep great employees. Without talking to your staff personally there is no way of knowing how they are feeling and what is making their job satisfaction levels rise and fall. By talking to current employees - and to employees who have left – you stand to gain a well-rounded and unbiased opinion of the factors that affect employee turnover and retention.

One of the biggest challenges with staff surveys is not actually conducting the survey, but processing the information once it has been collected. Understanding how to respond will take time at first. However, once the surveys are complete and you have had the opportunity to review the results, you will start to see a pattern or trend which will form the basis of your retention strategy.

As an example, based on feedback from your employees, you may identify the highest priority turnover factors at your facility. As soon as possible, change the factors that you can and communicate these changes to your employees. For those factors that cannot be changed at this time, explain why things cannot be changed and when the issue(s) will be re-evaluated.

TIP: Let your staff know that you are taking their feedback seriously; talk to your staff about what you are planning to change and not change and why. Talk to your staff about timelines and processes. The more they are informed and engaged the more effective your retention strategy.

Addressing Employee Retention Problems

Employers often do not engage in staff survey activities due to concerns that employees do not report their praise or concerns accurately, but instead downplay or exaggerate the issues. While these are realistic concerns, a well designed staff survey will anticipate and control the response bias.

Some techniques for increasing the accuracy and usefulness of responses are:

1. Do not ask for identifying information (age, gender, position, years with the organization) if it would identify an individual respondent. Very small organizations or those with only a few staff in a job class may only be able to seek general information in a survey format and then must follow up with volunteers for more specific information.
2. Responses should be returned to and collated by an individual that is not in a supervisory position to the respondent. Individuals who may be perceived as neutral in your facility include allied health staff, volunteers and students. In addition, some organizations utilize external consultants or confidential survey software to collect staff perceptions.
3. Question construction is crucial. Design questions so that they elicit personal responses and concrete feedback.
4. Implement the staff survey during a period of relative calm in the organization. If the organization is in the midst of crisis, then responses will be skewed towards the prevailing emotional climate.
5. Don't ask questions about topics which you are not willing or able to address. Staff surveys are a retention tool by providing actionable feedback to management and by communicating an interest in staff concerns. Failing to respond to the concerns identified undermines the purpose of staff surveys and has a negative impact on morale.
6. Be prepared to be surprised. You may find that an organizational feature that you perceived as trivial is quite meaningful to staff or vice versa.

TIP: The best surveys are those which are conducted on a regular basis. The more frequently you can gauge how your staff is feeling, the better you will be at planning for potential turnover and change.

ii. Exit Interviews

Exit interviews of former employees, can provide clear information on strengths or weaknesses – particularly for positions with a fairly large complement such as PSWs or RPNs. Exit interviews are also a good way of understanding how people are feeling as they leave your facility, and for the interviewer, to help calm emotions or smooth out any bad feelings, if they exist. It is important for your facility to maintain a positive staff reputation and a disgruntled employee moving to another organization will only do damage to that reputation. Similar to staff surveys, if you are going to commit to conducting exit interviews, the responses need to be taken seriously and where applicable, acted upon.

Addressing Employee Retention Problems

Exit interviews typically ask exiting employees about themselves, the reasons they are leaving, their level of satisfaction on several aspects of the facility, and if any changes would have made them reconsider their decision to leave. Exiting employees tend to feel more comfortable in being more honest and forthright in their opinions regarding all aspects of your facility from the recruitment practices, supervision, pay, benefits, treatment, promotional opportunities and other aspects of their work experience.

Below are some example questions that can be included on an exit interview:

1. Why are you leaving? (If the termination is voluntary.)
2. Are there any changes or improvements that would have prevented you from leaving? (Again, if the termination is voluntary.)
3. What did you like most about working at this facility?
4. What did you like least about working at this facility?
5. How would you evaluate the performance of your supervisor?
6. Did you feel the facility provided you with sufficient training, opportunities for advancement, benefits, etc.?
7. Do you have any suggestions for ways the facility or your department might make work more pleasant and productive?

Once exit interviews are complete, you may want to plot the responses in a common framework to help you review and create recommended changes. An example of how you can assemble the responses are as follows:

- Why have some of our best people left? What could have been done to prevent their departure?
- What important issues are hidden or unresolved? What do employees really think about management? What are we doing wrong? What are we doing right?

2.6 Becoming an Employer of Choice

Becoming an "employer of choice" has both internal and external benefits. The result of these benefits can be interpreted as an employer of choice cycle which may unfold as follows:

- The creation of a positive work environment where employees are happy, results in...
- Greater job satisfaction and job performance which results in...
- Better resident care which results in....
- Greater demand for beds at your facility which results in...
- A positive reputation among potential residents, your community and potential employees which results in...
- Greater generation of business/business performance and qualified employees which results in...
- A positive work environment.

Addressing Employee Retention Problems

By creating a great workplace you are also creating a place where people want to live and receive care in a mutually reinforcing cycle of increasing performance and satisfaction. Residents and families understand that satisfied employees provide better care and want the facility staff treated well.

Facilities that aim to increase their strength in their market place tend to actively promote an image of employer of choice in all of their communications with residents, families, employees and the community. This means identifying and articulating all of the vital links between employee satisfaction and the care received by residents, so that your facility is able to attract and retain the best employees as well as attract residents. The objective, in this case, is to brand or develop a reputation as a "great place to work" and by association as a "great place to live". However, in order to use this branding and marketing technique, there needs to be staff commitment and buy in to make this happen. The facility staff need to reinforce the desired image in their informal communications with friends and colleagues in order to develop and maintain your "brand promise" in the community.

3.0 **SECTION**

Special Considerations for Some Targeted Staff Groups

Special Considerations for Some Targeted Staff Groups

3.0 Introduction

Many of the tools and tactics provided to you in this booklet can be used for any of your facility staff. However, you may find it helpful to develop some specific retention strategies designed for certain facility staff segments. For example, if a number of your staff have young children you might want to consider offering a day care service in your facility benefiting both residents and staff. Alternatively, if starting a day care centre is not feasible for your facility, see if you can establish a relationship with a daycare centre near you where the children of staff can go. This makes daycare convenient and potentially less expensive for your staff. Many organizations that have created a day care centre have found that their staff have increased productivity, have taken fewer days off and have been happier overall with their employer.

The following are some strategies and tactics which might help you with specific facility staff segments. In particular, the following looks at specific recruitment strategies for mature workers, generation X'ers and people who are new to Canada.

3.1 Mature workers

Many organizations are finding that the mandatory retirement age of 65 will leave them with a staff shortage or that their staff who are moving into the "retirement age" have no desire to stop working. Statistics show that within the next ten years, the 55-64 year age group will comprise almost 50% of the Canadian working population. If all are expected to retire at that time, a major labour crisis could occur. Many people over the age of 55 would prefer to stay active and maintain their employment but are concerned about deteriorating health, relationships with younger workers, the environment, etc. Since maintaining mature workers is beneficial to both the facility and employees, the following are some retention strategies which may be helpful for both mature works as well as your facility.

Some strategies to think about include:

- Creating variable and flexible scheduling which better suits mature workers.
- Developing gradual retirement alternatives which benefit both you and your employee.
- Creating job sharing programs between mature workers.
- Teaming mature workers with newer workers to reduce the work load, help with heavy lifting and create mentorships. Mentorship programs benefit all staff as the mature workers feel valued for their expertise and younger, less experienced workers, feel like they have a good resource to turn to.
- Offering mature workers learning and teaching opportunities to enrich their job or create specific mature worker training programs that accompany changes in the workplace e.g., computer training, new technology, etc
- Training supervisors to work with mature staff to reduce potential barriers between themselves and mature workers and younger staff and mature workers.

3.2 Generation X

Generation X refers to people who currently fall into the age range of 29-35; for many facilities they may represent mid-level staff. Generation X'ers are unlike other generations (e.g. baby boomers) as they tend not to view employment as permanent and believe they will have more than one employer in their lifetime. Generation X'ers are very family oriented and will not sacrifice their family for their job. These two characteristics can partially be attributed to seeing their parents laid off and growing up as children of divorced families. As such, managing and retaining Generation X staff will require a different strategy from previous generations.

Special Considerations for Some Targeted Staff Groups

The benefit of a focused "X'er" strategy is that you can maintain your facility's future senior staff and you can build long-term relationships within your facility. Here are some strategies to promote retention among your X'er staff:

- Look at various ways of revising your management structure. Access to decision makers is very important to this generation.
- Find ways to provide them with ongoing and senior management feedback. Encourage employee growth and provide personal feedback when possible.
- Unique performance based promotions and rewards – Generation X'ers feel better about their job when recognized for an outstanding job. Think about providing recognition through unexpected rewards, such as a day off or a free dinner for the employee and their family.
- Build morale - encourage initiative and welcome new ideas. This generation enjoys having fun at work. Don't be afraid to try something new every now and then.
- Try to create flexible schedules and appreciate that this group values their life outside of work as well.

3.3 New Immigrants

Working at a new job can be very stressful and sometimes confusing. When one is new to a country these stresses are multiplied even further. There are some strategies which facilities can employ to help retain employees who are new to Canada. Many of these strategies revolve around making sure that your staff feel supported and accepted.

Here are a few strategies to consider:

- Try to create an environment that recognizes the variety of cultures in your facility. This might include:
 - Creating a flexible schedule for special holiday time off. Many people from various countries celebrate various religious and cultural holidays that do not fall into traditional statutory holidays.
 - Recognizing various cultural foods and cultural events to demonstrate openness and acceptance of the people working in your facility. This might also be fun for your residents.
 - Create flexible scheduling to accommodate the new citizenship process that new immigrants must go through e.g., meetings, interviews, tests, etc.
 - Promote a community environment at your facility that is supportive and helpful to people new to the country. Think about teaming new immigrants with people who have been in the country for a number of years to work together.
 - Provide Federal, Provincial and Community resources that can assist new Canadians become familiar with their country and community. Think about offering details on organizations in your community that assist new Canadians. Providing this information and support demonstrates that you are a caring and understanding employer which in turn creates loyalty.

TIP: Place helpful resources and information for new Canadians in your orientation package.

4.0

SECTION

Appendices

Appendices

Appendix A

Cost of Turnover Estimate

Calculation Steps	Calculation	Output
Line 1	Sum of terminations in the previous 12 months=	
Line 2	Sum of established positions=	
Line 3	Average annual wages of those who left=	
Line 4	Percentage cost for replacing an average employee*= $\frac{\text{Line 3}}{\text{Line 2}} \times 100\%$	
Line 5	Turnover rate=line1/ line2 x 100%= $\frac{\text{Line 1}}{\text{Line 2}} \times 100\%$	
Line 6	Cost of Turnover= line 1 x line 3 x line 4=	
Line 7	Proposed cost± to reduce Line 6 by 50%=	
Line 8	Cost Savings = line 6 x 0.5 – Line 7=	
Line 9	Return on Investment (ROI)= Line 8 / Line 7 x 100%= $\frac{\text{Line 8}}{\text{Line 7}} \times 100\%$	

* See section 1.1.2 for an explanation of estimating the average cost of turnover per employee.

± This is the dollar amount you propose to spend on reducing turnover.

Appendix B

Additional Reports

For more information on the tactics and strategies adopted for the retention of staff in long-term care facilities in Ontario, the following organizations may be contacted to obtain these and related reports:

- **Deloitte & Touche and OANHSS. Becoming an Employer of Choice: Recruitment and Retention Strategies: OANHSS – Professional Development Forums: Outputs from the workshop December 14, 2000.**

This report focuses on the tactics developed by 50 participants representing 45 organizations to encourage careers in long-term care. The results provide a starting point to address retention issues and position the sector for future human resources success. Find out what your colleagues believe are success factors in retaining LTC staff.

- **RNAO and RPNAO. Overview of Research Findings of RNAO/RPNAO Report on Nursing Recruitment and Retention in Ontario.**

This report offers a synthesis of nursing research findings in the areas of Administration, Organization, Professional Practice and Professional Development that are related to the retention of nurses in Ontario. This body of research shows some strong results in how organizations can implement change efforts to improve nursing retention.

5.0

SECTION
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